

# GRIEF

Counseling Guide

**DBU**  

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**COUNSELING CENTER**  

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**DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

# WHAT IS GRIEF

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**G**rief is a term that indicates one's natural reaction to loss, both internally and externally. Grief can manifest itself in individuals on an emotional, cognitive and physical level when he or she experiences significant deprivation from the loss. There are many types of losses that occur throughout our lives. However, what every significant loss has in common is that the individual who loses something is separated from the lost person, object, status, or relationship.

Examples of situations or events that can cause GRIEF:

- Divorce or relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- Miscarriage
- Retirement
- Death of a loved one
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- Loved one's serious illness
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of safety after a trauma
- Selling the family home

## HEALTHY GRIEF:

- Intense Sorrow
- Physical Symptoms
- Fantasy
- "Life has no meaning"
- Inefficiency
- Depression
- Restlessness
- Pain
- Loneliness
- Desire to talk
- Irritability
- Disorganization
- Anger

## UNHEALTHY GRIEF:

- Intensified
- Delay in grieving
- Hopelessness
- Impulsiveness
- Withdrawing
- Rage
- Prolonged grief
- Helplessness
- Moodiness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Guilt
- Addiction

# THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

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It is important to remember that not one person grieves the same, nor does one person experience all the stages in order.

## DENIAL

In this stage, the individual may feel like life makes no sense. This is the state of shock and denial. Individuals may go numb. Individuals may wonder how life can go on, if they can go on, why they should go on. Individuals may deny the existence of the grief or initial event. Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief.

## ANGER

It is a necessary stage of the healing process. Individuals must be willing to feel anger, even though it may seem endless. The truth is that anger has no limits. It can extend not only to the individual's friends, family, and loved ones, but even to God. Underneath anger is pain, your pain. It is natural to feel deserted and abandoned.

## BARGAINING

In this stage individuals may use tactics such as pleading. Phrases like, "Please God," or "I will never do it again if..." are common. "What if I" thinking may become primary in the individual's mind. The individual may rehearse things they believe they could have done to prevent their grief or the initial event that caused the grief. Individuals may begin to make promises to God, like "I will devote the rest of my life to helping others if..." Bargaining with the pain can occur. Individuals may do anything not to feel the pain of this loss.

## DEPRESSION

This stage may be when empty feelings present themselves, and grief enters the lives of individuals on a deeper level. It is the appropriate response to a great loss. Individuals may withdraw from life as a direct response to the grief. When a loss fully settles the realization that the individual lost something significant or a loved one didn't get better this time or a passed person is not coming back is understandably upsetting.

## ACCEPTANCE

This stage can often be confused with the notion of being "all right" or "OK" with what has happened. This is not the case. This stage is about accepting the reality and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality. As the individual begins to live again and enjoy life, they may often feel that in doing so, they are betraying a loved one that was lost. They can never replace what has been lost, but they can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, new inter-dependencies. Individuals begin to live again, but they cannot do so until they have given grief its time.

# MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF

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## **MYTH 1: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.**

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with the pain.

## **MYTH 2: It's important to "be strong" in the face of loss.**

**Fact:** Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak.

## **MYTH 3: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.**

**Fact:** Crying is a normal response to sadness; however, it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. Everyone grieves differently.

## **MYTH 4: Grief should last about a year.**

**Fact:** There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

# COMPLICATED GRIEF

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The term “complicated grief” refers to a persistent form of bereavement that dominates a person’s life. This is when grief interferes with a person’s daily functioning for an extended period of time. When symptoms are ceaseless for at least one year or more and interfering with one’s ability to return to routine activities, complicated grief may be implicated.

- Intense sadness
- Preoccupation with the deceased or with the circumstances surrounding the death
- Longing or yearning
- Feelings of emptiness or meaninglessness
- Difficulty engaging in happy memories
- Avoidance of reminders of the deceased
- Lack of desire in pursuing personal interests or plans
- Bitterness or anger

# THE BIBLE AND GRIEF

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To suppress grief is suppressing not just part of our humanity but a part of us that is in the image of God. Rocks and robots don't cry. Jesus did. The one in whom 'all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form' (Colossians 2:9) wept often.  
(Grantley Morris, 2014)

”

It is in our humanity to grieve, for our Heavenly Father grieves.

Just to name a few...

**Isaiah 53:3** “He was ... a man of sorrows...”

**Matthew 26:37-38** “...he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death...”

**Luke 19:41-42** “As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it...”

**John 11:33-36** “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord,’ they replied. Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how he loved him!’”

**Hebrews 5:7** “During the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears...”

**Genesis 6:6** “The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.”

**2 Samuel 24:16** “When the angel stretched out his hand to destroy Jerusalem, the LORD was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was afflicting the people, ‘Enough! Withdraw your hand.’”

**Isaiah 63:10** “Yet they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit.”

# THE BIBLE AND GRIEF

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An important part of overcoming grief is expressing it to God.

The Psalms contain numerous examples of pouring out one's heart to God. David always starts the Psalms with expressions of grief, but almost always ends it with praise.

## Psalm 13:

“How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,  
and my enemy will say, ‘I have overcome him,’  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;  
my heart rejoices in your salvation.  
I will sing the LORD's praise,  
for he has been good to me.”

When we commune with God, we are able to open our minds to the truth that He loves us, that He is faithful, that He is in control, and that He knows how He is going to work it out for our good.

There is hope...

Jesus is coming back and will restore all brokenness, and all the pain and suffering of this world will vanish. On this side of Heaven there is bound to be suffering and pain. Fortunately, our hope is in Him, and He will not forsake you; nor will He ever leave you.

**Mathew 5:4** “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

# GRIEF SENTENCE COMPLETION

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Right now, I feel... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I feel the saddest when... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The thing I miss the most about the person who I lost is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Since the loss, things have been different because... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

My family usually feels... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

If I could ask the person I lost one thing, I would ask... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

My worst memory is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Something I liked about the person who I lost was... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

One thing I learned from the person who I lost is... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

# GOODBYE LETTER

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To: \_\_\_\_\_

I am saying goodbye because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Saying goodbye makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I remember a time when we \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

You taught me \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Something I want you to know is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

I will always remember \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

From: \_\_\_\_\_

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