



LOSS BEYOND YOUR LOVED ONE

We often believe things about grief that aren't true, healthy, or even helpful. We call these misconceptions. Grief has many layers of loss. In our grief-avoidant culture, well-meaning people will try to help you not to feel bad and move on. Many don't understand that grief is larger than the loss of a loved one. Grief affects all the areas of our lives. The following is based on Wolfelt's Misconception #6. Summer 2022 blogs cover Misconceptions 1-5.

MISCONCEPTION #6:

False: When someone you love dies, you only grieve and mourn for the physical absence of the person.

"Sometimes I feel like I'm the one who died. I don't even know who I am anymore. All my life I've been a wife. George and I got married when I was eighteen. We're George and Vivian. The other day I signed a birthday card "Vivian and George." I don't know how to be just Vivian."

Howard patted her shoulder. "I've been a husband for sixty years. She was my rock; always knew what to say when I was down. My best friend. I miss holding her hand. Talking. She was always there. Now I talk to her chair."

"Steve was always there or me too, ever since prom," said Sheila. All our lives we've planned and saved for retirement. And he's gone at seventy-two! All our hopes and dreams, shattered. And it's hard. All the retirement and pension from him? Cut in half. Same bills. Less money. I'm afraid."

"I'm afraid too," added Marla. "Being alone in the house, especially at night. Dan always made me feel safe just by being with him. I leave the lights on."

The Grief Group silently mulled over losses circling around them like falling dominoes. Ted turned to the leader, "Margaret, what's going on?"

SECONDARY LOSSES

"A Primary Loss is losing your loved one. Then you're bombarded with Secondary Losses. When I lived in Florida and a hurricane was coming in, we soon

learned the danger of the the tornadoes that spun out from it. First you go through your hurricane of the shock of losing your loved one. Now you face the tornadoes.

"Let's see if we can get you into the eye of the storm, that place of peace. Frankly that doesn't take place immediately or easily. That you are sharing your feelings so openly will expedite the healing. But nothing will ever be the same. Let's look at Understanding Your Grief by Alan Wolfelt, pages 38-39. He clarifies that grief is much more than losing your loved one.

LOSS OF SELF

"Wolfelt points out that our identity gets tied into our roles. You don't feel like yourself anymore. It takes time to find out who you are now that your role no longer exists. You will become more confident over time."

Jessica started to cry, "When I was pregnant I was a mom. But I miscarried. Am I a mom? Or only a mom if Tommy was born alive?"

Vivian rose to hug her, "Jessica, you're a mom who's grieving a baby boy. Don't let anyone try to convince you differently. Tommy is your son."

LOSS OF SECURITY

"Marla, you touched on how you don't feel physically safe. Sheila, your financial fear is very real. Your life is turned upside down, you may not feel safe emotionally, or in this new lifestyle. The person who helped us is gone, and you may feel unprotected," continued Margaret.

(Article continues next page...)



LOSS OF MEANING

Sheila said, "Wolfelt points out that after we lose someone, we suffer the loss of hopes and dreams. That's me."

"Ted, you haven't said much," Margaret's voice softened.

"It's my faith I question. I know I talk a lot about prayer. Right now, I have doubts about my faith. I know God's there but why did Tina have to die from Covid? I'm having a hard time with this. I'm so angry at God, and myself. It should have been me that died, not her."

I wonder if I'll ever be happy again. So, Margaret, what is the way out of this?"

REACHING OUT - ACTIONS TO TAKE

"There is no way out, the only way to find peace is to go through the loss and fear. I suggest you not go it alone. I also suggest you be very selective on who you turn to during this season, so you receive the understanding and care you need." Margaret handed out a sheet with the headings, LOSS OF SELF, LOSS OF SECURITY, LOSS OF MEANING.

REASSESSING LOSS OF SELF

"You never lose your Self. Your True Self is the inner you. It is much larger than the role you played in your loved one's life."

Draw a circle in the middle of the page. That is your True Self. Put all your best qualities inside that circle, such as, "I am forgiving, loving, organized, a hard worker, brave, intelligent, hopeful... you get the idea. These are the things that you call on to be resilient and be in the world. Your True Self."

"Draw other circles and list interests, roles, childhood joys, anything good or bad that makes up you, be sure to add hopes and dreams."

"Knowing your True Self grounds you as you go forward to reorient and reinvent your life. As you look at your drawing, what do you discover as you return to your childhood? Vivian, I know your whole world centered around George, especially with his progressive dementia, the move from your home into Assisted Living, and all the heartaches and decisions you made on his behalf. You will always be George's wife, but I believe you might discover things about yourself that bring you happiness. What were some things you liked doing when you were a girl?"

Vivian pondered. Then smiled, "I liked to draw, and paint." She giggled, "And climb trees."

"I can see you now Vivian," teased Howard, "perched up on a thick limb, breeze blowing, sketching away."

Vivian tossed him a defiant look, "Before I bore children, I was an artist. What did you like to do?"

"I pretty much farmed all my life. I'm good at training horses. Still got a couple. When Alice was dying from cancer, my daughter took care of them. Sometimes I help kids to learn how to ride. You could come out there and draw... only if you bring one of your pies."

"I don't make pies anymore," she said her voice flat.

"Well maybe you should! George always bragged on that State Fair ribbon you won, not only for pie, but for your Plum Rum Jam."

"Let's not 'should' on each other," Margaret reminded gently with a smile, enjoying Howard's affection for his friend's wife. "Vivian, sounds like you have some talents you haven't shared."

Margaret turned to the group gazing lovingly in the hope to encourage healing hearts. "It can help to share your feelings with a friend. Who listens to you without judging? Someone who builds your confidence or makes sure you take care of your health and get some rest? The first year you are mourning, you are more prone to accidents and health issues. Take this time and give yourself a break. Your body, mind and spirit all need rest. Look in the mirror and smile, even if you have to fake it. Say: "I'm okay. I'm doing the best I can. It's going to be alright. It's going to take time."

"I can't. I don't feel it." Philip said, defiant, yet remorseful.

"I understand. You must re-train your mind. I'm not talking about denying your grief. Talk about every feeling. You must feel to heal. At the same time, consider reassuring yourself and reminding yourself of hope, and healing, and a positive future beyond your grief."

VickiJolene Lindley Reece[®], Continuous Care Coordinator



Homework: REESTABLISHING SECURITY

Emotional Security: Losing your support system can make you feel unsafe. Who can put an arm around your shoulder for emotional support? Does playing music bring you peace? Some find it helpful to leave the television or radio on.

Physical Security: What would help you feel physically safer? Who can help you with that be it a lock on the door, motion detecting lights, timers on lamps? Would having a pet help?

Financial Security: Who can you trust to look over your financial situation, explain and advise? Many banks, insurance companies, government, social security, Medicare, require computer skills. Who can patiently teach you new skills or be hired to help you? Be sure to choose a Financial Power of Attorney and notarize the document in case you are incapacitated and unable to make financial decisions. Did your spouse die? Be sure to change death beneficiaries on all bank and investment accounts.

Medical Security: Death is a reality, yet you will live. There is peace of mind in choosing a Medical Power of Attorney, notarizing the document, and filing it and a Living Will both at home and into your hospital record.



SUMMER'S SIMPLE PLEASURES

The purple stain of mulberries as you eat them from the tree

The laughter of children at the park

The tart tingly sweetness of lemonade

The whirl of a box fan

The distant drone of grass being mowed

The delight of jewel toned gardens

The chattering of birds, the chattering of squirrels

The comfort of root beer popsicles and ice cream

The soft feel of grass under your feet

The joy of flickering fireflies

The glistening sun on a lake or river

The smell of hamburgers on the grill

The anticipation of children waiting for fireworks

The rumble of summer storms





INSPIRATIONAL QUOTES

Grief never ends...But it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith...It is the price of love." -Queen Elizabeth I

"Sometimes in life, you can fall down holes you can't climb out of by yourself. That's what friends and family are for—to help. They can't help, however, unless you let them know you're down there." -Meg Cabot


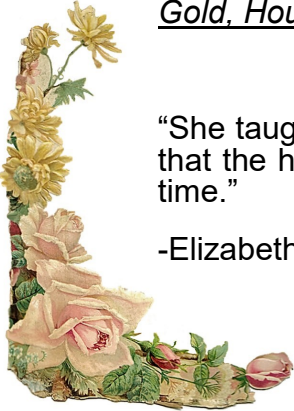
"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." -Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again."

-Helen Steiner Rice

"To suppress the grief, the pain, is to condemn oneself to a living death. Living fully means feeling fully; it means being completely one with what you are experiencing and not holding it at arm's length." -Philip Kapleau

"I do not believe that sheer suffering teaches. If suffering alone taught, all the world would be wise, since everyone suffers. To suffering must be added mourning, understanding, patience, love, openness and the willingness to remain vulnerable. But there is no simple formula, or swift way out, no comfort or easy acceptance of suffering." -Anne Morrow Lindbergh *Hour of Gold, Hour of Lead*



"She taught me that grief is a time to be lived through, experienced fully, and that the heavens ill not fall if I give voice to my anger against God in such a time."

-Elizabeth Watson

HOW WILL I FACE THE DIFFICULT DAYS?

You are facing Difficult Days. How will you companion those who are grieving? Or who will you trust to come alongside and help you? Grace, acceptance, patience, kindness, and the ability to bite one's tongue are key attributes of a good grief companion. It's a long journey. Don't go it alone. At Locke, we are here for you in the months and years that follow. The word companion is made from two Latin words, com or "with", and pan for "bread."

SOMEONE THERE FOR YOU

"Today was a Difficult Day," said Pooh.

There was a pause.

"Do you want to talk about it?" asked Piglet.

"No," said Pooh after a bit. "No, I don't think I do."

"That's okay," said Piglet, and he came and sat beside his friend.

"What are you doing?" asked Pooh.

"Nothing really," said Piglet. "Only, I know what Difficult Days are like. I quite often don't feel like talking about it on my Difficult Days either."

"But goodness," continued Piglet, "Difficult Days are so much easier when you know you've got someone there for you. And I'll always be here for you Pooh." (A.A. Milne, Winnie The Pooh.)

WHO WILL TRULY LISTEN?

As you journey through your or a friend's grief, it is very important to intentionally select those few people who will allow you to honor your own unique need to mourn. Two years ago, Jack Locke hired me to serve as Continuous Care Coordinator. Basically, that involves caring for those who grieve, be it a phone call, a cup of coffee, writing informative articles, or facilitating our grief groups. At the same time, I learned that my husband, who had multiple health issues, was in ICU with a newly discovered brain tumor. He died months later.

I never would have thought that I'd need a grief group. Frankly, I have great friends and family. But I did. You may too as you face your Difficult Days. You may need a place to be quietly understood and able to share private feelings that family and friends aren't ready to accept. Or you may need to be silent and listen. All conversations are confidential.



COMPANIONING LOVES AND LISTENS

My promise is that you will experience what Dr. Alan Wolfelt calls "**companioning**." These tenets guide our gatherings:

Companioning is about being present to another's pain; it is not about taking away the pain.

Companioning is about going to the wilderness of our soul with another human being; it is not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out.

Companioning is about honoring the spirit; it is not about focusing on the intellect.

Companioning is about listening with the heart; it is not about analyzing with the head.

Companioning is about bearing witness to the struggles of others; it is not about judging or directing these struggles.

Companioning is about walking alongside; it is not about leading.

Companioning is about discovering the gifts of sacred silence; it is not about filling up every moment with words.

Companioning is about being still; it is not about frantic movement forward.

Companioning is about respecting disorder and confusion; it is not about imposing order and logic.

Companioning is about learning from others; it is not about teaching them.

Companioning is about compassionate curiosity, it is not about expertise.

When you first experience a loss, there is shock and confusion, along with a multitude of details and expectations. The weeks that follow can feel very confusing and you ever wonder if you can feel normal again. In fact, you may feel like you are going crazy. You're not going crazy. You are grieving. We companion each other much like sharing a meal together. It's not all tears. There's so much laughter as we share stories. We feel to heal. Sometimes people come who have carried grief for months, even years and they find the healing they need. I invite you to join us around the table on Thursdays. (1:00-2:30 at Cabin Coffee 2040 Kimball, Waterloo, or 5:00-6:30 at Locke Tower Park 4140 Kimball, Waterloo Iowa.) I'm always available for a cup of coffee. Call 319-233-3146. It's a free gift for the community.



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JOIN US every Thursday!

2023 Continuous Care Support Groups



Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00–2:30p.m.

LOCATION:

Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball Ave., Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:

Locke Tower Park, 4140 Kimball Ave, Waterloo

DATES:

July 6, 13, 20, 27

August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

September 7, 14, 21, 28

Please feel free to bring a friend

All groups are *free* and open to the public! Call with questions at 319-233-6138.

WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.

Want to be on our mailing list? Give us a call, and we can add you to our quarterly newsletter list.