

Grieving vs Mourning (Wolfelt)

Grief is what we think and feel inside; mourning is our outward expression of grief. It is through active and honest mourning that we reconstruct hope and meaning in our lives.

Mourning is crying, talking about the loss, journaling, sharing memories, and telling stories. Other ways to mourn are praying, making things, joining in ceremonies, and participating in support groups

Mourning is how, over time, we begin to heal from loss.



Realistic Expectations of Grief

- Grieving often lasts longer than is expected
- **Grieving takes considerable energy**
- Grief involves secondary losses; relationships, financial status, activities, etc.
- **Some people question if they are going crazy**
- Grief bursts occur- acute upsurges of grief may occur suddenly with no warning
- **Grieving involves mourning for lost hopes, dreams, and unfulfilled expectations**
- Questions regarding religion and/or philosophy of life may be prevalent, and a search for a new meaning may begin



Grieving Children and Teens

- Explain death in simple, physical terms (i.e. What it means to be dead), then discuss religious beliefs
- Be honest and simple in your explanations-age appropriate information
- Be aware of developmental capacity and levels of understanding (see handout)
- Let children see you grieve. Be honest with your own feelings. Model appropriate emotional release
- Include children in funeral or memorial rituals
- Try not to emotionally burden grieving kids
- Keep in touch with how older kids are doing in school
- Counseling can be helpful



Holidays and Anniversaries

Grief Bursts can happen at any point in the journey.

Holidays and Anniversaries are times where a bereaved person can expect for grieving and mourning to be intensified.

It is important to prepare and develop new rituals to support your mourning process.



Common Dimensions of Grief

No two people grieve in the same way. Coleen touched on six common dimensions of grief. This table recaps the six dimensions and provides examples of what a grieving person might experience:

Physical Behaviors	Feelings	Thoughts	Behaviors	Social Dimensions	Spiritual =
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue GI symptoms Sleep difficulties • Weight gain or loss • Anxiety - heart palpitations, shaking, hot flashes Headache • Muscle aches and pains • Chest pain, pressure • Tension, agitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shock, numbness, denial • Anxiety, fear, panic • Loss, emptiness, loneliness • Sadness, depression • Hurt, frustration • Helplessness, hopelessness • Explosive emotions • Resentment, guilt, regret • Relief, emancipation • Reconciliation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disbelief • Confusion • Preoccupation with the deceased • Sense of presence • Lack of concentration • Trouble remembering things • Emptiness or heaviness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absent-mindedness Crying and sobbing • Restlessness • Trying to "stay busy" • Treasuring objects or places that remind of the deceased • Avoiding reminders of the deceased • Experiencing sudden "grief attacks" • Dreams of the deceased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social withdrawal Fear of being alone • Dependent, clingy behavior • Surrounding self with others as a form of distraction Irritable, moody • Attempts to replace the loss • Changes in role, status, family system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for meaning • Asking "why?" • Mystical experiences • Feeling abandoned by God • Anger at God • Comfort from God New dimensions of faith • Using rituals to heal • Prayer and meditation

Unrecognized Loss

"As a society, we think we know what loss is: the death of a parent, partner or child; the destruction of a home through disaster; the shattering of finances through bankruptcy. These are tangible, recognized - sanctioned, if you will - losses. But counselors know that in reality, life brings myriad losses, many of which go unrecognized, unacknowledged and, most importantly, un mourned."

(Source: Grieving Everyday Losses)

Symptoms of Unrecognized Loss

Physical	Emotional	Cognitive	Behavioral	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headaches • Loss of appetite • Insomnia • Pain Other physical symptoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sadness • Depression • Anxiety • Guilt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obsessive thinking • Inability to concentrate • Distressing dreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crying • Avoiding others • Withdrawing socially 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for meaning • Pursuing changes in spiritual practice

Complicated Grief vs. Clinical Depression

Many therapies used to treat depression will not heal grief. Grief is a normal reaction to loss. Depression is generally caused by a chemical imbalance.

However, for some people grief does not get easier over time. Feelings of emptiness and despair can stay intense for a very long time. These people feel stuck in grief.

Regular grief has up and downs. Complicated grief has no ups at all. A person may feel constantly worthless, hopeless, and empty.

Some people may also experience post-traumatic stress (PTSD) in response to the trauma of the loss or from caretaking

Encourage people to reach out if they are suffering from complicated grief or if they are unsure

National Mental Health Hotline

The National Mental Health Hotline is a 24-hour helpline you can call for advice about all kinds of issues. The hotline is confidential and staffed by trained individuals who can connect you to a local grief counseling helpline or other free services, depending on the support you need. We support people across the United States and can help you find free, confidential mental health resources in your area.

(866) 903-3787