

Complicated Grief

Complicated grief is like being in an ongoing, heightened state of mourning that keeps a person from recovering. The signs and symptoms listed below are normal grief responses; however, with complicated grief they continue long after the loss has occurred.

Signs of complicated grief:

- Intense sorrow, pain and rumination
- Extreme focus on reminders of the loss or excessive avoidance of reminders
- Trouble accepting the loss
- Numbness, detachment or bitterness
- Feeling that life holds no meaning or purpose
- Inability to enjoy life or think back on positive experiences before the loss
- Difficulty carrying out normal routines
- Isolation from others or withdrawal from social activities
- Depression, deep sadness, guilt or self-blame
- Believing that the loss could have been prevented or feelings of guilt
- Feeling life isn't worth living

Anyone can experience complicated grief; however, the death of a child, a loss that is sudden or traumatic, the belief that the loss could have been prevented, a lack of support, and the experience of multiple losses can all increase the risk of complicated grief.

If you or a loved one is struggling after a loss, it is important to talk to your primary care physician as well as a professional counselor.

About Urban Alliance

Urban Alliance is a Christian collective impact organization located in East Hartford, CT. Our goal is to create opportunities for people to achieve lasting change in their lives through the collaborative work of churches and organizations in our local community.

Your support helps mental health resources, like this brochure, get into the hands of the people who need them most.



urbanalliance.com



Grief and Loss



Everyone experiences loss.

It may be the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, declining health, a new diagnosis, a failed relationship or a move.

Losses take many different forms, and grief is a normal and natural reaction to loss or change of any kind. It is painful, it is work and it is unique for each person.

If you have experienced loss or are grieving, know that you are not alone and support is available.

Understanding Grief

Everyone experiences loss. Grief is a normal and natural emotional reaction to loss or change of any kind. It is painful, it is work and it is unique for each person. Grief can impact a person emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually.

Emotional

- Sadness or a sense of sorrow
- Helplessness or anger
- Excessive guilt
- Yearning for what or who was lost

Physical or Behavioral

- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Emptiness or pain that can be felt physically in the chest, stomach, or elsewhere in the body
- Restlessness or inability to sit still or concentrate
- Lethargy or exhaustion
- Tears or "grief bursts" that can occur at unexpected times

Cognitive

- Disbelief or feeling as though the loss isn't real
- Forgetfulness or not finishing what is started
- Poor focus, difficulty concentrating on tasks or lack of motivation
- Questioning, asking or wondering why the loss occurred

Spiritual

- Searching for meaning and purpose
- Altering or questioning personal beliefs and values
- Looking to God for help or comfort
- Feeling betrayed by God

Tasks of Grief

It is normal to experience grief after a loss. There are four tasks accomplished through grief that help a person readjust to life and the world around them. They create the acronym TEAR. These tasks can occur in any order and people may need to revisit these tasks over time.

#1: To accept the reality of the loss

There are basic ways a person can accept the reality of a loss, such as verbally acknowledging that it has occurred, planning a funeral or memorial, or beginning to speak about the person (or whatever was lost) in the past tense.

#2: Experience the pain of grief

Each loss will require a person to work through many different emotions. From sadness, fear, loneliness, despair, hopelessness and anger to guilt, blame, relief and countless others, there are many emotions a person may experience. It is important to acknowledge, talk about and understand these complex emotions, and look to God for comfort and help through the process.

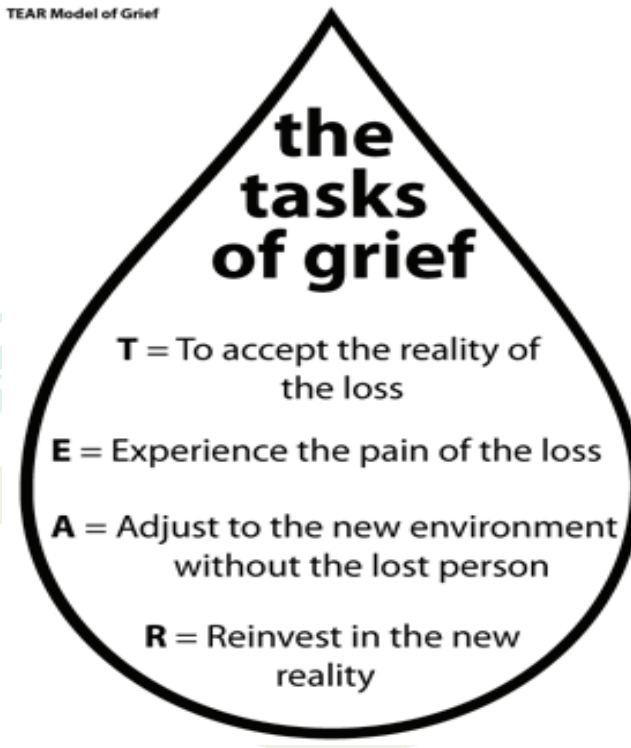
#3: Adjust to an environment without the person (or whatever was lost)

This task can mean very different things to different people depending on the relationship to the person who has died or the nature of the loss, as well as the roles that are impacted by the loss.

#4: Reinvest in a new reality

This final task involves finding an appropriate, ongoing connection in one's emotional life with the person who has died (or thing that was lost), while continuing to live life in the present without them. This often means allowing for thoughts and memories while beginning to meaningfully engage with things or people that bring pleasure and joy.

TEAR Model of Grief



Helpful Scripture through Grief

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:3-5)

“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” (Psalm 34:18)

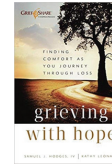
“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:3)

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelations 21:4)

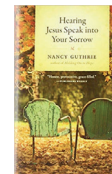
“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4)

Helpful Resources

Adults



Samuel Hodges and Kathy Leonard
Grieving with Hope



Nancy Guthrie
Hearing Jesus Speak into Your Sorrow



Dr. H. Norman Wright
Recovering from Losses in Life



David & Nancy Guthrie
When Your Family's Lost a Loved One

Children



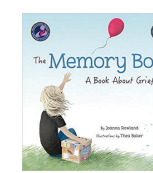
Todd Parr
The Goodbye Book



Christine Harder Tangvald
Someone I Love Died



Lisa Bergren and Laura Bryant
God Gave Us Heaven



Joanna Rowland
The Memory Box

Building a Network of Support

Most people need extra support after a significant loss.

Friends, family, pastors, care ministries and support groups can offer practical, emotional and spiritual support. It is also important to talk to your primary care physician as well as a professional counselor if you are struggling to cope.

Find a Counselor

- **Charisnetworkct.org** offers a listing of CT professional Christian counselors.
- **Psychologytoday.com** offers a general listing of professional counselors.
- **Urbanalliance.com/help** offers a listing of CT behavioral health providers by county.



Charis Website

Support Groups

- **GriefShare** offers support groups in the community for people who have experienced a loss. It is Biblically-based, and through their group meetings, communities of people support one another as they grieve. Visit the GriefShare website (griefshare.org) or call 1.800.395.5755 to find a group.
- **Divorce Care** offers Christ-centered support after a divorce. To find a group near you visit www.divorcecare.org.

Immediate Support

- **Mobile crisis teams** visit people in their homes or in the community for crisis situations. **Dial 211** and ask for Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services.
- **National Suicide Hot line: Dial 988** for support.
- If you or a loved one are not safe, **call 911 immediately** or visit the nearest emergency room.