

charis



Supporting People through Grief and Loss



Charis is an Urban Alliance initiative. www.urbanalliance.com

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Urban Alliance works with churches and parachurch organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help.

Many people who are struggling with their relational, emotional and mental health do not receive the support they need. They often do not know where to turn for help, or are embarrassed to acknowledge they are struggling. Additionally, a lack of resources in the community, poverty and stigma may keep people from receiving help.

Research shows that the church is one of the most common places people go to seek help when they are struggling emotionally. This is why it is so important for pastors and care providers to be equipped to offer care and connect people to appropriate help. Many churches offer support groups, care ministries or pastoral care. And, professional counselors who offer care from a Christian perspective provide services in the community.

Urban Alliance works with churches and organizations to help them communicate about mental health in ways that offer hope and create safe environments where people feel comfortable seeking help. Urban Alliance also equips care providers to respond sensitively, effectively connect people who are seeking care to appropriate support, and provide care, so they may cope well and heal.

The Charis website is a tool, managed by Urban Alliance, that can be used by individuals and organizations to help connect people in need of support to high-quality professional counselors, support groups and specialized support services offered from a Christian perspective.

These collaborative efforts have helped hundreds of people overcome barriers and more effectively cope, have ongoing support, strengthen their relationships, experience hope, joy and peace, and persevere despite life's challenges.

*To learn more about Charis, visit www.urbanalliance.com/charis.
To visit the Charis website, visit www.charisnetworkct.org.*



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Everyone experiences loss. It may be the death of a loved one, loss of a job, declining health, a new diagnosis, a failed relationship or a move. These types of difficult or painful experiences are a natural part of life. Loss can be physical (i.e. through death, foreclosure or losing a valued possession) or psychological/symbolic (i.e. losing a job, loss of an identity or divorce).

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 is often related to love. People tend to grieve more intensely when they experience the loss of the things most loved in their life. Grief can impact a person emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. According to H. Norman Wright (2006), through grief, a person:

- expresses their feelings about a loss
- protests the loss and expresses their desire to change what happened
- expresses how they are affected by the devastating impact of the loss

Grief is a Natural Response to Loss

Grief is experienced differently by each person and can impact a person emotionally, physically, behaviorally, cognitively or spiritually. Some common experiences include:

Emotional:

- Sadness or a sense of sorrow
- Helplessness or difficulty performing activities of daily living
- Hopelessness or feelings that life may not be worth living
- Fearfulness or feeling that someone else will die, that they are going crazy, or that something bad might happen
- Anger that the death or loss has occurred
- 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
- Distracted behaviors, constant work or relocation
- Reminiscing, telling or retelling stories about a person who died, wanting to keep things exactly as they were, or looking at pictures

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

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Myths and Misconceptions

Despite the fact that everyone experiences loss and that grief is a natural response, people are often uncomfortable with the strong emotions experienced by people who are grieving. A number of myths and misconceptions exist as a result of this widespread discomfort and misinformation communicated as a result of cultural norms and expectations. In her book, *Grief and Loss: Theories and Skills for the Helping Professions*, Katherine Walsh (2006) shares five common misconceptions:

Misconception #1: Time heals all wounds

Time alone does not heal. It is what people do over time that matters most. To facilitate healing, people need to be able to acknowledge their loss, express their feelings and feel a sense of connection with others who care.

Misconception #2: People find it too painful to talk about their loss

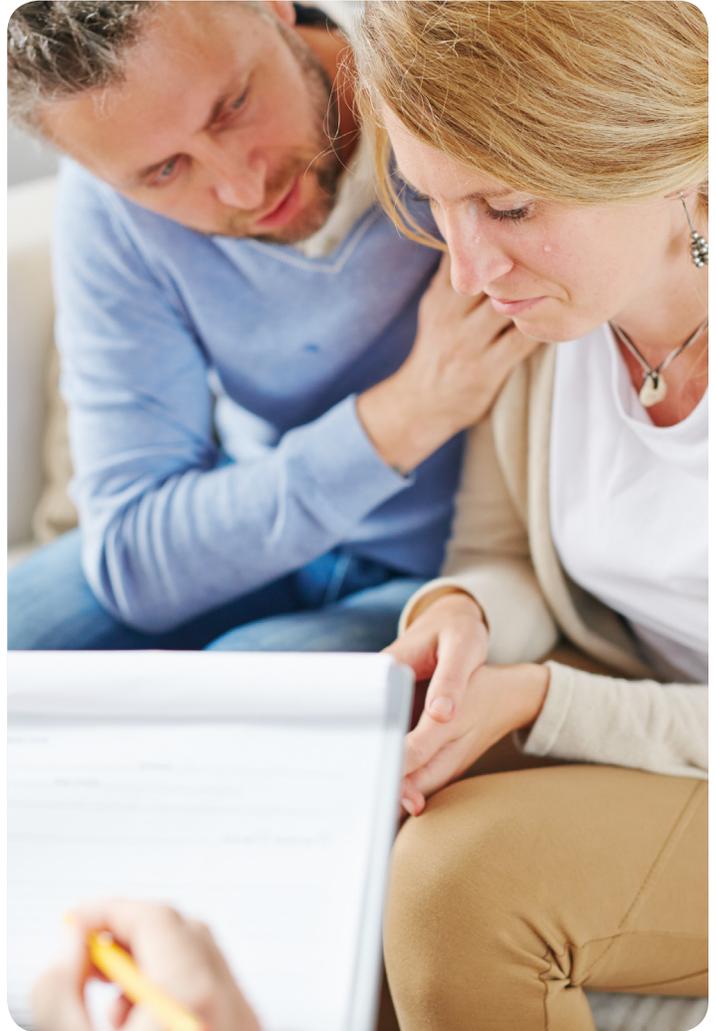
Most people grieving after a loss have expressed that even though it is painful, they also find it comforting and healing to have opportunities to express and share feelings in a safe and caring environment. This connection creates a source of comfort and strength that can become a foundation for healing.

Misconception #3: Quickly putting the grieving behind speeds the process of healing for every grieving person

Each person grieves in their own way. We can best support people by listening to their thoughts and feelings, allowing for painful emotions to be expressed and supporting restorative activities while allowing the person to grieve at their own pace.

Misconception #4: The grieving process should last about one year

Again, the grieving process is different for each person. As such there is no designated amount of time it “should” or “should not” take. It is important for people to work through their grief in a way that fits their personality, preference and needs.



Misconception #5: Crying indicates that someone is not coping well

People often view crying as a sign of weakness or that a person is not coping well. However, crying is a healthy and normal response after a loss. Friends and family can help by offering supportive relationships where a grieving person can express their emotions in their preferred style. They may express feelings in a variety of ways including crying, talking, sitting silently, or expressing anger.

Sudden, Anticipatory and Ambiguous Loss

Loss comes in a variety of forms, each bringing a set of unique experiences and varying degrees of pain, sorrow and grief.

Loss can be sudden, anticipated or ambiguous.

Sudden Loss:

(Loss that occurs suddenly and often unexpectedly)

This type of loss is particularly disorienting and often results in feelings of numbness or disconnection from reality as the person makes sense of what has happened. Depending on the type of loss and the person's response, this may also be considered a crisis or trauma. With sudden loss, a person's focus is on dealing with the aftermath, grieving and rebuilding their life.

Anticipatory Loss:

(Loss that a person knows is likely to happen in the future)

A person's situation suggests loss is likely. This may be due to a diagnosis, a person's age or missed mortgage payments likely to result in foreclosure.

Anticipatory grief looks very similar to the grief that follows a loss, but begins before the loss has occurred. It can be helpful, if it enables the sharing of feelings that promote intimacy and connection or unhelpful if it results in distancing and isolation. With anticipatory grief, the person has opportunity to say or do things that may help them after the loss has occurred (Walsh, 91).

Ambiguous Loss:

(Loss that occurs without closure or understanding)

This kind of loss leaves a person searching for answers which often complicates the grieving process. Examples of ambiguous loss include infertility, disappearance of family members, or a family member who is physically alive but in a state of decline due to diseases such as Alzheimer's or dementia. Ambiguous loss can either be physical or psychological. People who experience ambiguous loss are likely to experience *disenfranchised grief*. This happens when the grief that a person experiences comes from a loss that cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned or socially supported.

- **Physical ambiguous loss:** The body of a loved one is no longer present, but there is not closure. Examples include missing persons, incarceration, soldiers missing during war and Holocaust victims whose bodies were never recovered.
- **Psychological ambiguous loss:** A person is still physically present, but psychologically absent. Examples include Alzheimer's, dementia, serious mental illness or brain injury.

Loss comes in a variety of forms each bringing a set of unique experiences and varying degrees of pain, sorrow and grief.

Models Describing Grief

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's Five Stages of Grief Cycle

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross developed the five stages of grief framework that describes five stages people pass through as they grieve. These stages do not occur in any particular order and a person may pass through some or all of the stages as they grieve:

Denial

The first reaction to learning about a loss is often to deny the reality of the situation. Denial is a defense mechanism that helps a person buffer the shock of the loss and numb overwhelming emotions.

Anger

As a person emerges from denial, the reality and pain re-appear. Anger is often felt and expressed. The anger may be directed anywhere, at a dying or deceased loved one, objects, family, friends or even strangers.

Bargaining

A normal reaction to feeling helpless and vulnerable is bargaining. Bargaining is used to help a person regain control and prevent or postpone the loss. It can also take the form of "if only" statements. For example, "If only we had sought medical attention sooner" or "If only we got a second opinion." Guilt often accompanies bargaining if the person starts to believe there was something they could have done differently to change the outcome.

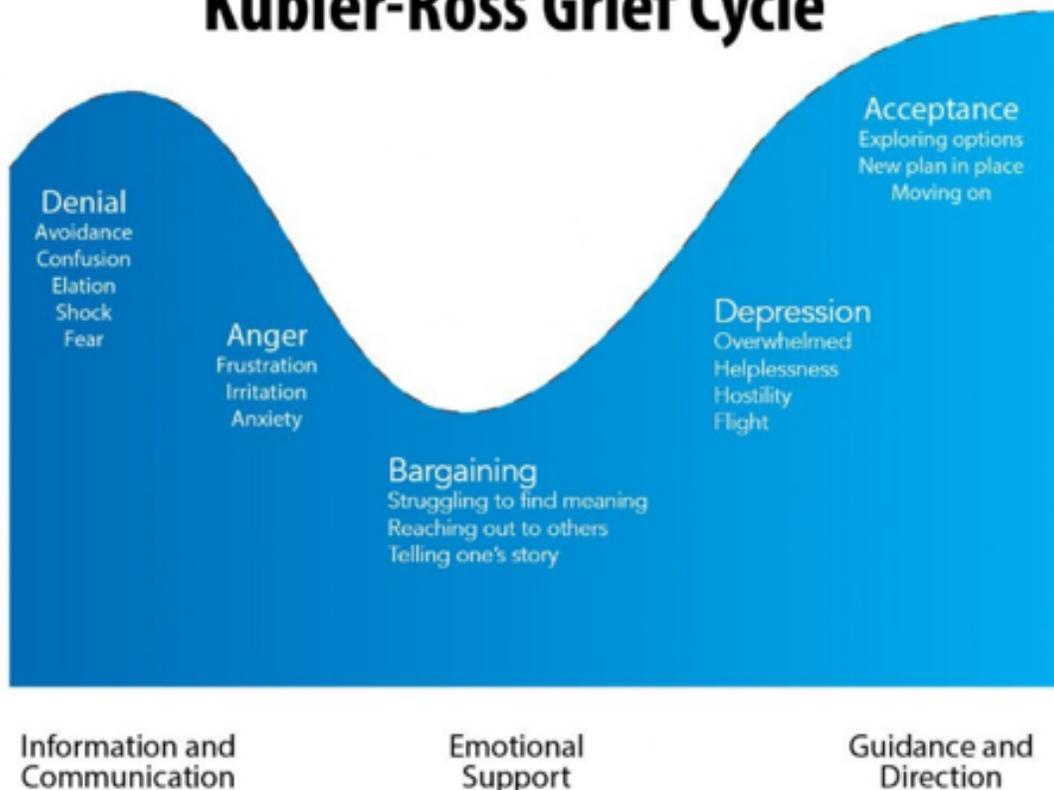
Depression

During this stage, the person feels intense feelings of sadness associated with the loss.

Acceptance

During this stage, people face and come to accept the loss. The painful emotions soften and the person starts to think about their future and how they will rebuild their life after the loss.

Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



William Worden's Tasks of Grief

Worden (2009) suggests that there are four tasks one must accomplish for “the process of mourning to be completed” and “equilibrium to be reestablished.” These tasks can occur in any order and people may need to revisit tasks over time. They create the acronym TEAR.

Task #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 is occurring, planning a funeral or memorial, or beginning to speak about the person (or whatever was lost) in the past tense.

Task #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.

Task #3: Adjust 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 whatever was lost), as well as the roles that are impacted by the loss. When the loss is the death of a loved one, it may take a significant period of time just to realize the different roles their loved one performed or make adjustments that are required, such as paying bills, living alone, being a single parent, cooking meals, or taking care of the home.

Task #4: Reinvest in a new reality

This final task involves finding an appropriate, ongoing connection in our emotional lives with the person who has died (or whatever 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.



Anniversaries, Holidays and Special Days

Situations that remind a person of a significant loss can stir very strong grief reactions. It might be the anniversary of a loss or traumatic experience, experiencing the holidays without something or someone, or a birthday or wedding anniversary. Sometimes these situations catch a person off guard. They may have initially experienced strong emotions of sadness and over time found that the intensity of the emotions diminished. Then, out of the blue, they may wake up on an anniversary and feel overwhelmed with grief. This is a very normal reaction.

Some people find it helpful to make a special plan for such days. The bullets below describe some things that may be helpful as a person prepares for an anniversary, holiday or important date:

- **Be prepared:** Knowing that a person is likely to experience grief on a certain day can help them understand their feelings and cope in a healthy way.
- **Plan a distraction:** Planning something fun to do with friends or a self-care activity such as a hike or spa day can offer a helpful distraction
- **Reminisce about what was lost:** Some people find it helpful to focus on the good things about the relationship (or what was lost) and the time together, rather than the loss. They may write in a journal about some of the positive memories or look at pictures.
- **Start a new tradition:** Some people honor the memory of loved ones on special days by making a donation to a charitable organization or planting a tree. For losses such as divorce because of domestic violence or that involve a medical condition such as dementia, a person may choose a charitable organization helping other survivors.
- **Connect with others:** Scheduling time with family or friends during a time when a person is likely to feel sad or lonely can help them. Building in support can bring comfort during difficult times.
- **Allow a range of feelings:** It is normal and healthy to feel a range of emotions. These may include sadness about the loss as well as joy and happiness as a person spends time with loved ones.

Situations that remind a person of a significant loss can stir very strong grief reactions.



The Bible says that after a person's physical body dies their soul continues to live. Because Jesus defeated sin and death, those who have faith in Him are made spiritually alive and will continue to live with God in heaven. The words “eternal life” are often used to describe this state of living after the death of one's physical body.

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?’” (John 11:25-26).

When a Christian loses a loved one that had faith in Jesus, this truth can bring great comfort and hope. They can imagine their loved one living in heaven, free of pain and sadness and in the presence of God. There is also the promise of reunification. That is, in time all believers will be together in heaven. Therefore, physical death is a temporary separation. At the same time, this truth should not be used to minimize the pain associated with the loss of a loved one. Phrases like, “he is in a better place” or “you will see her again in heaven” are true, but should not imply the person

should grieve less or not feel sad. It is important to validate a person's emotions associated with the loss.

However, when a Christian loses a loved one that was not known to have faith in Jesus, it can cause great distress. 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9 says, “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.”

The thought of a loved one in hell is overwhelming. The grieving process can be more complex when this is the case and can result in complicated grief. The person may wonder if there is something they could have said or done differently that would have resulted in the deceased coming to faith. When this is the case, phrases such as “he is in a better place” can actually cause more pain. It is important to understand a person's beliefs before making spiritual statements.

According to Nancy Guthrie (2016), the first things to

Death and Christian Beliefs

remember when a person is concerned about a loved one who died without professing faith, is that none of us really know the state of another person's soul. We are limited and do not have God's perspective. The thief on the cross is a good example. He did not have any fruit in his life, but the moment before his death he put his faith in Christ. The second thing to remember is that we can trust God to do right. By trusting in this truth, a person can find comfort and confidence in the character of God. By focusing on the God who will always do what is right, and remembering that He is also abundant in mercy, a person can find comfort in uncertainty.

Through the Gospel Coalition, Nancy Guthrie created a video on this topic:
www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/comfort-when-unbeliever-dies

Complicated Grief

During the first few months after a loss, a person may experience many strong emotions and reactions. For most people these reactions soften in time and the person is able to continue with life and enjoy relationships and activities. In some cases, a person may have a difficult time coping after a loss. The person may continue to have strong emotions or impaired functioning long after the loss occurred. Complicated grief is like being in an ongoing, heightened state of mourning that keeps a person from healing. The signs and symptoms listed below are normal grief responses; however, with complicated grief they continue long after the loss has occurred (Walsh, 2006 & Wright, 2006).

Signs that a person may be experiencing complicated grief:

- Intense sorrow, pain and rumination
- Extreme focus on reminders of the loss or excessive avoidance of reminders
- Problems 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

Although anyone can experience complicated grief, the presence of one or more of these risk factors increases the likelihood:

1. Death that is sudden, unexpected, traumatic, violent or random
2. Death from an overly long illness, such as Alzheimer's disease or cancer
3. The loss of a child
4. The belief that the death could have been prevented
5. A relationship with the dead person that was angry, ambivalent or overly dependent
6. The mourner having an illness that coincides with the death
7. The mourner's experience of multiple losses within a short time
8. Lack of social support for the mourner

Coping After a Loss

“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.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

To heal through grief, it is important for a person to know what brings comfort. Comfort is a state of physical ease or freedom from pain. We see from 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 that God is described as the “Father of compassion” and “God of all comfort.” Therefore, the ultimate perfect source of comfort when a person is in distress of any kind is found in God. There is mystery in God’s comfort. We do not know exactly when or how He will give it, but we can trust that in the process of seeking Him it will come.

There are also a number of very practical things a person can do to experience comfort. Just as each person grieves differently, they also experience comfort differently. One person may find comfort worshipping at a church service surrounded by other believers, another person may need to spend time alone appreciating nature. In fact, the place that brings comfort to one person may bring distress to another. Therefore, it is very important for each person to figure out what brings them comfort.

Examples of things that may bring comfort include:

- Worship
- Reading the Bible
- Listening to music
- Spending time outdoors
- Getting a pet
- Drinking a warm beverage
- Writing in a journal
- Spending time with friends
- Physical activity or exercise
- Looking at or creating memorabilia
- Looking at sympathy cards or a funeral video
- Finding ways to serve in the community
- Spending time with God

There are endless healthy ways to find comfort. There is also a difference between finding comfort and numbing pain. Comfort allows for a sense of calm, love and peace while also allowing for painful emotions associated with grief to be experienced. Numbing does not allow for painful feelings to arise and immediately does something to make them go away when they do. Examples of numbing activities or unhealthy coping can include drinking alcohol, taking medication or drugs, oversleeping, overeating, shopping compulsively, overworking, lashing out at others, isolating or disconnecting from loved ones, viewing pornography, having affairs or engaging in unhealthy sexual relationships. It is important to know the difference between healthy and unhealthy coping and for a person to seek help if they are struggling to cope in healthy ways (Hodge & Leonard, 2011).

“Comfort is interesting because, like the experience of grief, the experience of comfort is not the same in everybody”

*-Paul Tripp,
pastor and counselor*

Building a Network of Support



Many people are able to cope and grieve after a loss with the support of family, friends and clergy. Clergy often play an important role in offering support after a loss has occurred. They may offer spiritual guidance and support, help plan a funeral or service, or help connect a grieving family to needed resources.

Friends, family and support groups may also offer needed support. They may prepare a meal, help with child care, provide prayer, or offer a listening ear.

GriefShare is a model that 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.

When a person experiences complicated grief they will likely benefit most from professional counseling and support. Counselors with this expertise can help a person process their feelings and work through the grief process.

The Charis website (www.charisnetworkct.org) offers a listing of Christian professional counselors practicing in central Connecticut and grief support groups.



*Visit the Charis website
(charisnetworkct.org), the
GriefShare website (griefshare.org)
or call 1.800.395.5755
to find a group.*

Offering Support to a Person Who is Grieving

After experiencing a loss, it is important to build a network of support. It is best for this network to include emotional, practical and spiritual support. Church ministries can train leaders to offer care and support to people who are grieving. In her book *The Phoenix Phenomenon*, Joanne Jozefowski offers the following model for ministering to people who have experienced a loss:

Listen

A good way to begin with each person is, “Tell me your story. I’d like to hear what you’ve been through.” Then, really hear their story with your eyes, ears, and heart. Compassion is a powerful tool and simply sitting with a person who listens and offers compassion is a healing experience.

Assess

As you sit with the person and begin to understand their situation, assess their needs:

- Psychological (emotional, mental/thinking, beliefs about the loss)
- Physical (hygiene, eating, sleeping)
- Practical (cooking, cleaning, childcare)
- Relational (support, friendship, comfort)
- Spiritual (prayer, feelings towards God, beliefs about afterlife or suffering, hope, meaning)

Consider how well their needs in each area are being met. Are unmet needs interfering with functioning?

Normalize

Offer validation that what they are feeling and experiencing is normal. They may need to hear this many times. It is one of the most important ways a person can offer support to someone who is grieving.

Reassure

Let the person know that they will be able to survive their grief journey even though it may be hard to believe at times. Remind them that support and help are available. Sometimes the phrase, “you will get through this” can be helpful. It is important to not put any time limits on the process or suggest they will “feel better” in a certain period of time.

Support

Help the person build a network of support, including friends, family, pastors or clergy, and counseling professionals. Help the person identify how they would like to be supported and help them make the connections to those people or places. It is in the context of caring and supportive relationships that people are able to express their thoughts and feelings about the loss.

Plan

Collaboratively set small, realistic and attainable goals and put the plan on paper or in an email to help the person remember.

Clarify

Work to collaboratively identify a person’s goals for themselves as they walk through the grief process.

Intervene

There may be times when gently correcting a person’s beliefs, behaviors or plans may be helpful. For example, if a daughter believes her father’s battle with cancer was lost because she did not pray enough, offering a different perspective or way to think about the loss may be helpful. Or, if a newly widowed man has stopping getting out of bed and eating, an intervention may be necessary.

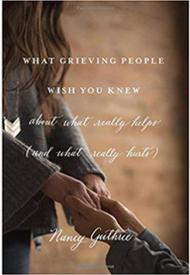
Educate

Offering information about grief and loss may help a person better understand their experiences. Books and printed materials may be helpful.

Monitor

Consider how the person is grieving. Are they moving through Worden’s tasks or Kubler-Ross’s stages of grief? Do they appear to be stuck? Are they moving in the direction of clinical depression? Are they accessing and using a support network for emotional, relational, practical and spiritual support? Do they need additional support or professional counseling? Monitor the person over time and remember that holidays, anniversaries and special days such as birthdays can cause strong feelings of grief even long after the loss occurred.

Helpful Resources Written From a Christian Perspective

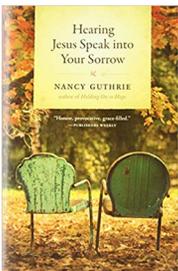


Nancy Guthrie

What Grieving People Wish You Knew about What Really Helps (and What Really Hurts)

We want to say or do something that helps our grieving friend. But what?

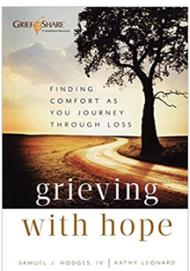
When someone we know is grieving, we want to help. But sometimes we stay away or stay silent, afraid that we will do or say the wrong thing, that we will hurt instead of help. In this straightforward and practical book, Nancy Guthrie provides us with the insight we need to confidently interact with grieving people. Drawing upon the input of hundreds of grieving people, as well as her own experience of grief, Nancy offers specifics on what to say and what not to say, and what to do and what to avoid. Tackling touchy topics like talking about heaven, navigating interactions on social media, and more, this book will equip readers to support those who are grieving with wisdom and love.



Nancy Guthrie

Hearing Jesus Speak into your Sorrow

In this paradigm-shifting book, Nancy Guthrie gently invites readers to lean in along with her to hear Jesus speak understanding and insight into the lingering questions we all have about the hurts of life: What was God's involvement in this, and why did he let it happen? Why hasn't God answered my prayers for a miracle? Can I expect God to protect me? Does God even care? According to Nancy, this questioning is not a bad thing at all but instead an opportunity. It's a chance to hear with fresh ears the truth in the promises of the gospel we may have misapplied. It lets us retune our souls to the purposes of God we may have misunderstood.

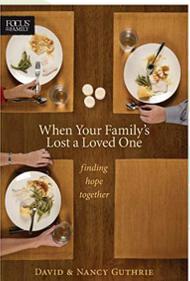


Samuel Hodges and Kathy Leonard

Grieving with Hope

Practical and straightforward, yet warm and compassionate, *Grieving with Hope* clarifies the popular misconception that people move through stages of grief. This will be an encouragement to many, as grieving people often think something is wrong with them when their grief doesn't proceed neatly through stages. The reality is that grieving people jump back and forth between different emotions, sometimes wrestling with multiple emotions at once.

This book is packed with short, biblically based, gospel-centered, topical chapters addressing the issues grieving people face but are often hesitant to mention to others. It helps readers accurately interpret the message their emotions are sending them and gently guides them to determine whether they're grieving in a way that leads to hope and ultimate healing. Developed from interviews with over 30 well-respected Christian counselors, teachers, and authors, as well as numerous personal testimonies, *Grieving with Hope* helps the bereaved discover how hope and peace are available amidst their heartache and pain.

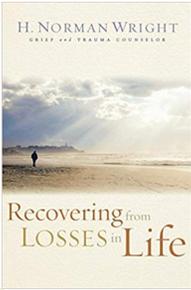


David & Nancy Guthrie

When Your Family's Lost a Loved One

All families eventually face the loss of a loved one. When it happens, it can place great strain on a marriage, as well as on other relationships. That's partly because we don't know what to do with our feelings and partly because every family member grieves in his or her own way. In this book, Nancy and David Guthrie explore the family dynamics involved when a loved one dies—and debunk some myths about family grief. Through their own experiences of losing two young children and interviews with those who've faced losing spouses and parents, they show how grief can actually pull a family closer together rather than tearing it apart.

Helpful Resources Written From a Christian Perspective

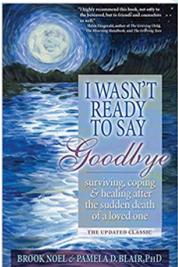


Dr. H. Norman Wright *Recovering from Losses in Life*

Life is marked by a variety of losses, says certified trauma specialist H. Norman Wright. Some are life-changing, such as leaving home, the effects of natural disasters or war, the death of a loved one, or divorce. Others are subtle, such as changing jobs, moving, or a broken friendship. But whether readers encounter family, personal, or community disaster, there is always potential for change, growth, new insight, understanding, and refinement.

Writing from his own experience, Wright covers such issues as the meaning of grief, blaming God, and learning how to express and share in times of loss. Now repackaged and updated with additional material, *Recovering from Losses in Life* will help readers find hope in difficult times. Study questions included.

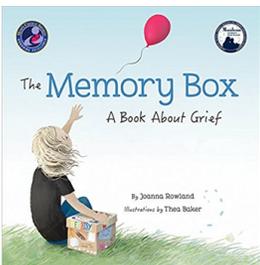
Additional Helpful Resources



Brook Noel and Pamela Blair *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye*

Each year about eight million Americans suffer the unexpected death of a loved one. For those who face the challenges of sudden death, the classic guide *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye* offers a comforting hand to hold, written by two authors who have experienced it firsthand.

Children's Books



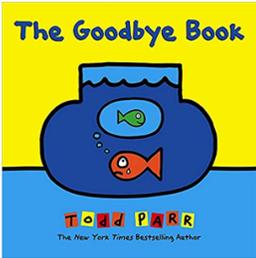
Joanna Rowland *The Memory Box*

"I'm scared I'll forget you..."

From the perspective of a young child, Joanna Rowland artfully describes what it is like to remember and grieve a loved one who has died. The child in the story creates a memory box to keep mementos and written memories of the loved one, to help in the grieving process. Heartfelt and comforting, *The Memory Box* will help children and adults talk about this very difficult topic together. The unique point of view allows the reader to imagine the loss of any they have loved, a friend, family member, or even a pet. A parent guide in the back includes information on helping children manage the complex and difficult emotions they feel when they lose someone they love, as well as suggestions on how to create their own memory box.

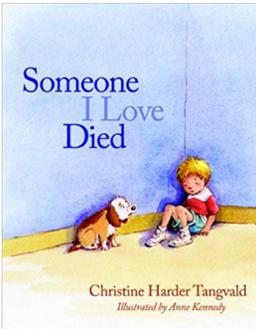
The Memory Box is a 2017 Moonbeam Children's Book Awards winner, a contest intended to bring increased recognition to exemplary children's books and their creators, and to support childhood literacy and life-long reading.

Children's Books



Todd Parr
The Goodbye Book

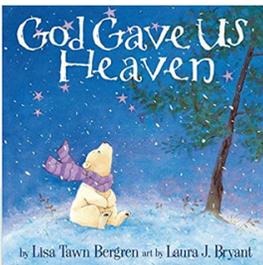
Through the lens of a pet fish who has lost his companion, Todd Parr tells a moving and wholly accessible story about saying goodbye. Touching upon the host of emotions children experience, Todd reminds readers that it's okay not to know all the answers, and that someone will always be there to support them. An invaluable resource for life's toughest moments.



Christine Harder Tangvald
Someone I Love Died

From best-selling and beloved author Christine Harder Tangvald comes an updated and revised edition of her classic book of comfort for grieving children, filled with heart-healing words, fresh watercolor illustrations, and practical resources that help adults guide children through loss.

First published in 1988, *Someone I Love Died* has long comforted the hearts of children 4 to 8 who have lost someone close. It gently leads children through grief with age-appropriate words and solid biblical truth that understands a child's hurting heart. The added interactive resources ensure this book will become a treasured keepsake. Once complete, children create a memory book of the loved one's life. And it offers grown-ups a tool that turns what could be a difficult season into a meaningful time of healing.



Lisa Bergren and Laura Bryant
God Gave Us Heaven

This gentle story provides satisfying answers for a young child's most difficult questions about what happens after this life, inviting "little cubs" to find comfort in knowing that *God Gave Us Heaven*.



Patrice Karst
The Invisible String

Parents, educators, therapists, and social workers alike have declared *The Invisible String* the perfect tool for coping with all kinds of separation anxiety, loss, and grief. In this relatable and reassuring contemporary classic, a mother tells her two children that they're all connected by an invisible string. "That's impossible!" the children insist, but still they want to know more: "What kind of string?" The answer is the simple truth that binds us all: *An Invisible String made of love. Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it deep in your heart, and know that you are always connected to the ones you love.* Does everybody have an Invisible String? How far does it reach? Does it ever go away? This heartwarming picture book for all ages explores questions about the intangible yet unbreakable connections between us, and opens up deeper conversations about love.

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