



Providing Hope When the Unthinkable Happens:

How to Help When Grief/Loss and Trauma Take Place

I) What is Trauma:

- Trauma results from exposure to an event or series of events that are emotionally or physically disturbing or life threatening. It is the physical, emotional, somatic, cognitive, and spiritual response to an event that an individual does not have adequate resources for.
- Examples of traumatic events:
 - i. Single incident traumatic event
 - ii. Relational trauma-chronic pattern (neglect, sexual or physical abuse)
- Big T and Little t
- PTSD- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - i. Simple PTSD (Acute Stress)
 - ii. Complex PTSD (Chronic/Developmental Trauma)

I. What is Grief:

- The psychological Response to a loss; the physical, emotional, somatic, cognitive, and spiritual response to actual or threatened loss of a person, place or thing to which we are emotionally attached.
- Grief follows the death of a loved one (including pets), as well as other losses: divorce, a career change, physical abilities, athletic injury, people leaving, moving away exc.
- Grief is a combination of different thoughts, behaviors and emotions.
- Grief and Trauma Symptoms:
 - Emotional numbness
 - Disorientation
 - Acute separation anxiety
 - Agitation
 - Sleep and appetite disturbance
 - Somatic disturbances (Body)
 - Waves of grief pangs or flashbacks
 - Urge to search (grief)
- There are different intensity levels of grief and also waves of grief.
 - Acute grief is the most intense period of grief.
- Intense Feelings about what you lost, coupled with sadness and often some form of anxiety, shame, anger or guilt.
- Uncontrollable behaviors and emotions may surface.
- Irritability is often at the surface.



- “Grief is crazy-making, it feels like psychosis (what is real what is not real), is implosive, explosive, arbitrary, unjust...But, it is as basic to the human condition as love and joy.” Sandra Beiman
- “Grief is the story of love after loss. It is not a state or a moment or a single emotion. It unfolds and evolves over time.” Katherine Sheer (Center for Prolonged Grief)
 - The work of grief-
 - Task I: Accept the Reality of the Loss
 - Task II: Work through the Pain of Grief
 - Task III: Adjust(Adaptation) to an Environment in which the Deceased is missing
 - Task IV: Emotionally Relocate the Deceased and begin to live again
 - Find life again- lifted, purpose, continue bonds with the person who died
 - New Identity: Understand yourself and live out of who God has made you to be in the midst of this new reality. —When there is a loss a persons identity is hit, core beliefs are hit.
 - This is a gentle internal process—it takes extreme care and patience from those walking with the grievers.
 - It is literally like loosing an arm. When a limb is cut off where does a desire to “adapt come from?
It is key to allowing yourself to be where you already are.

II. **What is Mourning:** the outward expression/response of our grief:

- How you express grief after experiencing a loss and how you adapt to grief after a loss
- Anything that expresses the grief
- Memorial services, funerals
- Wearing black
- Rituals-letting go of balloons, ash necklaces, photos expressing the loss or love of the person
- Note about Rituals: Rituals should be encouraged and can be a very helpful expression for the person grieving.
 - i. Reasons- we tend toward avoidance and this helps us move out of numbness and avoidance

III. **Acute Grief:**

- The DSM says it lasts 2-4 months after a loss.
- It is the body, nervous system’s emotional and spiritual overdrive of being in disoriented grief. This period lasts longer for some then others.



- This links to the attachment-proximity of the relationship, the individual and can link to daily reminders with regard to intensity (Give the example of after Max die).
- It can feel like you are drowning will never find air again.

IV. Attachment:

- Attachments come from a need for security and safety; they develop early in life, are usually directed toward a few specific individuals and tend to endure throughout a large part of the life cycle.
- We attach to a people, places, culture or our work
- Our identities are intertwined with our connectedness to others and to our experiences.
- In attaching, our identity is formed and when we have a significant loss our identity is shaken.
- Each person and relationship are unique, therefore each grief experiences is individual. Your grief is informed by the relationship to the loved one, your own attachment to them and your style of connecting to others.
 - Your history your ability to manage stressors.
 - Your support system and your current circumstances including the culture you live in influence how you grieve.
 - Disorientation can also be high. Grief hits on our attachment centers and our attachment center ground us, give us stability so we can function.

V. Pain: When we are traumatized or lose something with significant meaning to us pain ensues.

- Pain is an alarm bell that something is wrong. Remember the limb illustration.
- Disorder congenital insensitively to pain is when individuals do not feel pain. This physical disorder is dangerous as a person is not aware something has happened, therefore does not notice the issue and does not attend to the wound. This disorder leads to a shortened life expectancy.
- Pain lets us know something needs to be attended to.
 - i. What to do:
 1. Create space for the pain and feeling the pain
 2. Provide comfort and space—Allow the person to be where they are—you can't fix it. Allow Jesus to attend to them as you sit with them.
 3. Teach emotion regulation skills—ways to ride the pain waves
 4. *Dosing Pain*: The term dosing is a good description of how to move in and out of pain. One will need to build a “tool box” to manage the Pangs of Pain.



- a. Making space-allowing what is present to be present and not pushed down
- b. Tolerance of pain is Important
- c. Pushing pain away keeps it settled and makes the intensity grow. (Think of a physical infection here)
- d. Regulation Ideas:
 - i. Using journal prompts- Promptly journals, Joining a group, Attending counseling/coaching, Retreats (Much support is needed in Acute grief stage.), allowing time to cry, feel and experience what is already there when possible, Relationships that are present and safe.
 - ii. Come up for Air—Remember when in grief or traumatic response we have trouble breathing! Practice Breathing.
 - iii. Practice lighter moments
 1. Enjoy the good-rest-sit in the woods, go for a walk, pet your dog, go somewhere nice—do the things you enjoy and allow them to be what they are. Allow freedom to not feel the full joy—the goal is to bring some relief if possible.
 2. Practice and grow in receiving nurture from others, yourself, and from the Lord.
 3. Loss and trauma are very dis-regulating and disorienting—Grounding and finding any sort of rest is critical.
 4. Provide space and freedom to be. Consider if you are pushing yourself and gently be kind to yourself as you would to a friend.

“It is for freedom you have been set free.” Gal 5:1

VI. What do people go through when they are grieving and experiencing trauma?

- Grief is a form of trauma. When grieving one has to endure a full being response. Trauma is stored within your body. The stress can cause health problems. This includes emotional health problems and physical health problems.
 - i. *Common Grief and Trauma responses in the body include:*
 1. Fatigue
 2. Sleep problems
 3. Body aches



4. Chest tightness and shortness of breath
5. Headaches
6. Brain Slush: forgetfulness, focus, challenges, recall challenges
7. Stomach issues
8. Lack of appetite or an unassailable appetite
9. Immune system challenges due to fewer white blood cells being produced.
10. Heart problems
11. disruptions in blood flow (usually temporary)
12. shortness of breath
13. body aches due to extra stress hormones being produced.
14. When we experience traumatic events they reside somewhere- that place is in the body not the event itself.

VII. How do I know I am stuck in grief and other types of Grief:

- The short answer to this is lack of movement in grief.
- Grief movement looks like allowing the pain to come in and having ways to regulate the pain.
- Prolonged Persistent Grief- formerly know as complicated grief.
 - i. All grief is painful, unwanted and complicated, but the difference lies in its active state and motion.
 - ii. Symptoms:
 1. Continued feelings of not being able to accept the loss
 2. Fear, shame or anger about the grief itself
 3. Lack of care for one's own life
 4. Grief is considered the problem rather than a natural human response to loss
 5. Never being able to imagine being happy again
 6. A "stuck-ness" in acute grief and mourning is derailed
 7. Excessive avoidance of grief
 8. Ineffective emotion regulation
 9. Social/environmental problems

VIII. Secondary losses: limb, pet, job, marriage, eyesight

- Initial losses usually send a crescendos of others losses.
 - i. Finances
 - ii. Housing
 - iii. Someone to help with the chores around the house

IX. What if I get angry with God?

- Anger is a very normal part of grief and trauma process. Anger in general, at the person who died, the event or at others can happen. God is the author of



life. "He gives and He takes away." Anger at God is a very normal things that takes place.

- God can handle all of our emotions. Look at the Psalms. He knows us, He loves us and He also grieves that death is a part of our world.
 - i. As uncomfortable as it makes us, allow freedom in this area. Let's be honest and allow room for honesty. For Freedom. "It is for freedom that we have been set free."
 - ii. I believe that freedom is one of the most important things that takes place in grief.
 - iii. With trauma guided help to work through the pain is often needed.

X. Supporting Workers on the Field and their Unique needs.

- The need for FREEDOM and SUPPORT
- The need for Grace: First for yourself then from others
- The need-to-know Grieving and dealing with Trauma is exhausting and literally takes your brain power away.
- Sitting with someone can be deeply healing, allowing freedom and being a safe person or group.
- Meet practical needs-assist in creating space to rest and get tangible help.
- Put them in touch with someone who is confidential to talk to.
- Offer practical resources and aids.

The Gift of Hope in the Muck of life *HOPE*: Psalm 112:4a & 7-8 "even in darkness the light dawns for the upright...They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes."

Some Scriptures about Grief/Trauma:

- Psalm 112:4a & 7-8 "even in darkness the light dawns for the upright...They will have no fear of bad news; their hearts are steadfast, trusting in the Lord. Their hearts are secure, they will have no fear; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes."
- Deuteronomy 33:12 "Let the beloved of the Lord rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the Lord loves rests between his shoulders."
- Gal 5:1 "It is for freedom you have been set free."
- Matt 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."
- Psalm 23 The Whole thing ☺
- Psalm 121 "I lift my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from."
- Psalm 20:7 Some will trust in chariots and some in horses but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. (Grounding/hope)



- Psalm 9:18 But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish.”
- Romans 15:13 “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”
- Eph 3:17 “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Love sends out fear and helps us to receive everything we need)
- Romans 12:9-13 “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; and cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice Hospitality.” (Our service toward others and spurring on for the grieves)

Below are a few important things to consider regarding loss that will assist you in feeling more confident as you show up and love others in their pain of loss.

Best to Avoid (Don’t do it):

- Forget what has taken place for this person.
- Try to fix it, make life happier, or look for the bright spots, ignoring the painful spots.
- Avoid mentioning the person, event or loss.
- Minimize pain. We do not try to lower grief intensity; we do not consider its surges problematic, nor applaud its quieting. How often do we place values on how we manage grief or any emotions? Regulating emotions means attending to both painful and pleasant emotions. Accepting grief means we do not try to lower its intensity (Dr. Katherine Shear).

Helpful to Do (Do It!):

- Show up. When caring for others who have lost a loved one, it is essential to show up; just be there. The how of the showing up is not so important as the showing up. Often people feel uncomfortable around the person who



has experienced the death of a person; this can be very isolating and create additional losses, as well as a sense that they are fully alone in their darkest hour. You might need to be creative because of the death of a family member; or if your friend lives in another country; or if your local friend is expressing grief in a way that is foreign to you. But you can do it, you can find creative ways to show up . . . by showing up, you are building hope!

—Understand this is not going to be easy, and it is going to take time.

—Ask God to help you to find peace and to rest in the midst of it.

—Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to meet the needs of the person you are caring for.

—Be consistent in your care. Continue to show up and give the person freedom to feel and experience whatever they are experiencing.

—Use direct and compassionate words. Ask the person how they are doing with the death? Tell stories about the person. Talk about how your grief has been in relation to the named person.

—Ask the griever what they need and want.

—Be willing to be educated; humbly seek to understand and learn:

a) Grief is often much different than what we imagine, and each experience is so individual. Not only this, but grief changes and . . . sometimes changes rapidly.

b) Ask what someone is going through and what they need. That question alone may bring deep healing. As I have spoken to people grieving many say, “People just don’t understand,” or “They really don’t get it.” With your questions, you will help them to feel less isolated.

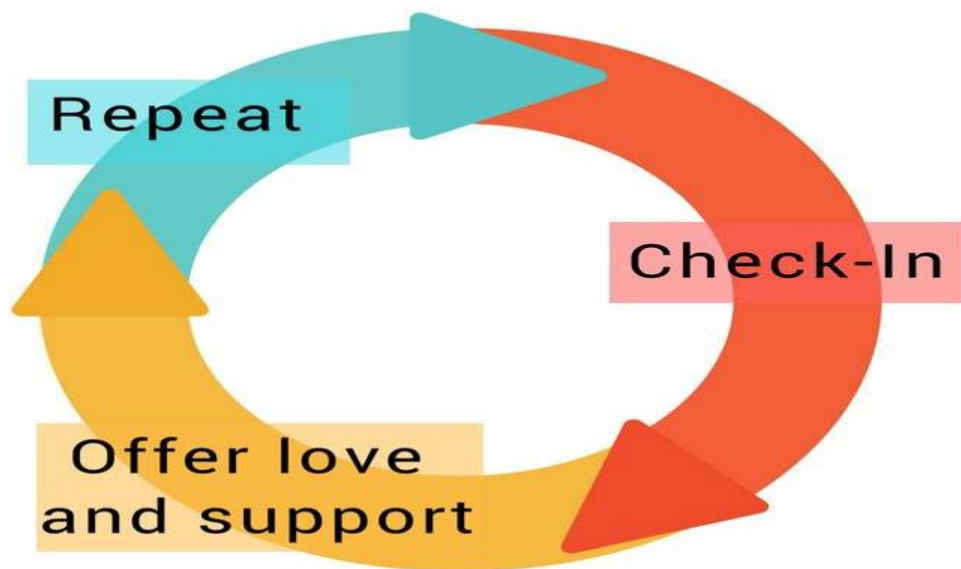
c) We likely don’t really understand their loss because every death is unique, so let them tell you what you don’t get. Even if you think you know, there is more to know about this particular death. Often this helps people feel heard, loved, and seen.

In summary, Grief is ongoing, and it lasts for a long time, therefore, let your support and love be ongoing. This diagram from What’s Your Grief is a wonderful visual of this: (see next page)



With loss we often want to check it off of our list and move on. I sent a card . . . check, I sent flowers . . . check, I went to the funeral . . . check, and I never want to think about it again . . . check. As someone removed from the loss, there is a strong desire to run from or ignore it. As we wrestle with this, remember the person who has experienced the loss firsthand does not have the luxury to run. By being present with them, we can provide hope that healing is possible and/or be a friend to walk with in the midst of the pain. “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other...And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...” Colossians 3:12-15

Grief Support Instructions:



www.whatsyourgrief.com



Break Out Sessions/Discussion:

- 1) What is the difference between grief and trauma?
- 2) What are some tangible ways to support Global Workers when grieving?
- 3) What are some tangible ways to support Global Workers when they have experienced a traumatic event?
- 4) How can we use the Fruits of the Spirit of the spirit to ground yourself as you interact with those who have experienced grief and trauma? What are regulation tools you can use and how can you co-regulate?
- 5) How can you tangibly give space to Global works to go through grief and work through trauma rather than practicing avoidance? (“Going on a Bear Hunt?”)

Resources:

Books:

- I am going on a Bear Hunt By: Michael Rosen
- It’s Ok That Your’r Not Ok By: Megan Devine
- A Grief Observed By: C.S. Lewis
- A to Z Healing Toolbox By: Susan Hannifin-MacNab
- This Too Shall Last: Finding Grace when Suffering Lingers By: K.J. Ramsey
- The Year of Magical Thinking By: Joan Didion
- The Bright Hour Memoir is Living and Dying By: Nina Riggs
- The Body Keeps the Score By: Bessel Van Der Kolk

Articles:

- [Healing Your Grieving Heart: 100 Practical Ideas](#) by Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D
- [Help Someone in Grief](#) By: The Center for Loss
- [The Center for Complicated Grief](#)

Web Sites:

- <https://globaltrellis.com> (Search Grief or Katie Brown)
- <https://whatsyourgrief.com>
- <https://prolongedgrief.Columbia.edu>

When talking to kids consider



<https://whatsyourgrief.com/childhood-grief/>

Tips on How to talk to grieving children.

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/telling-a-child-that-someone-has-died>