

Five Keys for Working Through Loss

Apostolic Christian Counseling & Family Services
877-370-9388 www.accounseling.org info@accounseling.org

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."
Matt. 5:4

- We all experience loss in our lives.
- It is experienced in a variety of ways.
- Sometimes it is clearly apparent and sometimes it is more nuanced.

What are keys for working through loss in our lives?

Five Keys to Working Through Loss



1 Acknowledge the Reality

Not all loss is the same:

- Public vs. private.
- Tangible vs. ambiguous (e.g., unmet expectations, death of dream).
- Sudden/Acute loss vs. Ongoing/Chronic loss (e.g., dementia).
- Centrality of the impact on attachment, identity, etc.

Various losses will cause different levels of emotion.

- Many people want to treat their loss as something **static**.
- Loss produces a **dynamic** cascade of emotions that come and go in waves. Healing tends to come in layers.
- **Give permission to yourself to be honest about your loss.**

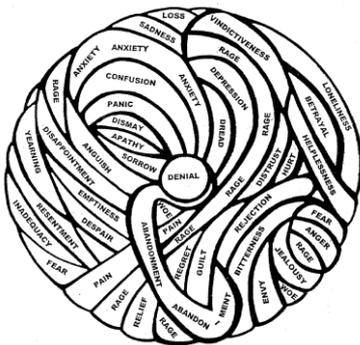
Resource: ["Grief and Emotions"](#) ACCFS article

1

Acknowledge the Reality

Grief Ball

1. Dynamic, not static.
2. Waves, not a straight line.
3. Layers, not all-or-none.

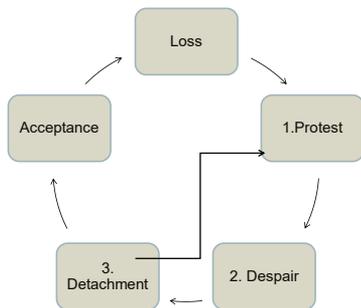


2 Allow Time & Grace

- While there is no one "right" way to grieve, there are certainly better and worse ways to do so.
- We can't predict when reminders or waves will come and how long they will last, but working through them over time brings healing.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Our willingness to participate in the journey of grief often rises and falls.
- Avoid comparing your journey with someone else's journey.
- There are numerous models of grief. You may find one or more helpful. *They are guides to be flexibly applied.*

Resources: [Phases of Grief](#) – ACCFS article

2 Allow Time & Grace



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One Model of Phases of Grief

1. **Protest**
Shock, confusion, denial, anger at others, anger at self, anger at God, lowered self-esteem.
Crying, pain, weakness, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, etc.
2. **Despair**
Agony, grief, anguish, depression.
Bargaining and "urge to recover" that which was lost; slowed thinking and actions; continuing physical symptoms.
3. **Detachment**
Apathy, indifference, loss of interest, desire to withdraw and "give up"
Decreased socialization; no new friendships; bland expression, absent spontaneity.

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3 Lean into Community

Isolation vs. Community

- The type of loss and your personality will often impact how many people you want with you on your journey.
- While there is no ideal number of supporters, avoid isolation.
- Others can remind us of God's faithfulness and promises.
- Community provides gentle accountability to continue our journey.
- **NOTE:** There is a tension between pushing oneself to move forward faster than one can sustain, and the other pole of wanting to wait until one feels like moving forward before trying.
- **NOTE:** There will likely be times you need to forgive people for comments that they did not even realize were insensitive to your loss. "*God forgive them for they know not what they just said.*"

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3 Lean into Community

A supportive community can help work through your loss.

- Being with those who have experienced similar losses is often helpful.
- Avoid seeking support *only* from people who have had the exact experience you have had. You will accidentally cut yourself off from key support.

Reminders for Helpers:

- The ministry of presence is powerful. Just show up.
- Prayers "for" and Prayers "with" the grieving person.
- Helping someone through loss doesn't mean you are always talking about the loss.

Resources:

- [Making Peace with our Pain & Loss](#) – ACCFS Course.
- [Grief Support Groups](#) – ACCFS Article

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4 Lament before God

- It is important to be able to turn to God in our pain... even raw pain.
- "Lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust."
- "Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart wrestling with the paradox of pain and the promise of God's goodness."
- In the Bible, there are individual and communal laments recorded.
- ~1/3 of the Psalms are laments.
- **Resource:** [Lament: Bringing our Emotional Pain to God Podcast](#) – ACCFS Website

FROM DARK CLOUDS, DEEP MERCY BY MARK WROGOP

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4 Lament before God

- A pattern for lament:
 1. **Turn:** An address to God
 2. **Complain:** Pour out our heart
 3. **Ask:** A request or petition
 4. **Trust:** An expression of trust or praise
- "Christians affirm that the world is broken, God is powerful, and he will be faithful. Therefore, lament stands in the gap between the pain and promise."

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Learning How to Lament Using Psalm 13

¹ How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever?
how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

² How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having
sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be
exalted over me?

³ Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine
eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

⁴ Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him;
and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

⁵ But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall
rejoice in thy salvation.

⁶ I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt
bountifully with me.

2. Complain

3. Ask

4. Trust

1. Turn
to God
in your
pain

5 Healthy vs. Prolonged Grief

- Most people adjust to loss over time and with perspective.
- We must be very careful to avoid telling people they are grieving incorrectly.
- However, studies show 4%-15% of bereaved adults experience symptoms of **Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)**.
- Individuals with PGD experience ongoing, intense grief symptoms that prevent them from reintegrating into their lives.

Resources:

- [Brief Grief Questionnaire](#): - online questionnaire
- Reach out to a professional for support.

(PROGRIEVE ET AL. 2021; COERIN ET AL. 2021)

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Prolonged Grief Disorder

- A. The loss of a close other person must have occurred:
- At least a year ago for adults.
 - At least 6 months ago for children and adolescents.
- B. The grieving individual must have experienced **at least 3** of the symptoms below **nearly every day** for at least the last month prior to the diagnosis.
1. Identity disruption (such as feeling as though part of oneself has died).
 2. Marked sense of disbelief about the death.
 3. Avoidance of reminders that the person is dead.
 4. Intense emotional pain (such as anger, bitterness, sorrow) related to the death.

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Prolonged Grief Disorder

5. Difficulty with reintegration (such as problems engaging with friends, pursuing interests, planning for the future).
 6. Emotional numbness (absence or marked reduction of emotional experience).
 7. Feeling that life is meaningless without the deceased person.
 8. Intense loneliness (feeling alone or detached from others).
- C. The person's grief is required to last longer than might be expected based on social, cultural, or religious norms.

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God is our Comfort

"Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

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