

Supporting Those Who Grieve: A Guide for Professionals

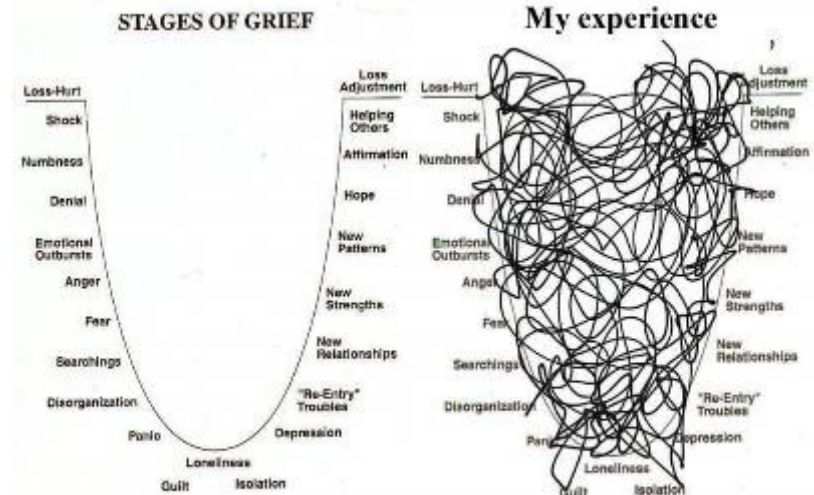
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A hand-painted sign on a dark blue background. The text is written in white, thick, blocky letters. The background is decorated with small, colorful dots in red, yellow, and green. The sign is centered within a white circular area on a light blue background.

SAYING
GOODBYE IS
HARD TO DO

Grief Modalities

- Primary Loss
- Secondary Loss
- Elizabeth Kubler-Ross
 - Stages of Grief (D.A.B.D.A.)
- William Worden
 - 4 Tasks of Grieving



Language

- Avoid euphemisms
- Tell the truth
- Remember that what you say will stay with them forever so delivery is important
- Suicide and homicide (use age appropriate language)
- Avoid running for the tissues and saying “I am sorry”

Put Away the Magic Wand

- Don't try to fix it
- It will take longer than you think
- Empathize don't sympathize



Common Grief Reactions

Physical

- Chest pains, abdominal pains, headaches, nausea, breathing difficulty
- Change in appetite
- Weight change
- Fatigue
- *Sleeping problems*
- Restlessness
- *Crying or sighing*
- *Feelings of emptiness*
- Tightness on the throat
- Feelings of unreality
- Hyperactive or under active
- Shaking or trembling
- *Weakness or feeling dizzy*



My
Tears
Help Me
Remember



Common Grief Reactions

Emotional

- Numbness
- *Sadness*
- Anger or rage
- Shocked
- Disbelief
- Fear
- Relief
- Irritability
- *Guilt*
- Loneliness
- Longing
- *Anxiety*
- Meaninglessness
- Apathy
- Vulnerability
- Abandonment
- Jealousy
- Empty

Common Grief Reactions

Behavioral

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- *Impaired thinking and decision making*
- Wandering aimlessly
- Misplacing items
- *Easily overwhelmed*
- Searching for your loved one
- Dreaming of your loved one
- *Trouble focusing*
- *Sensing your loved one's presence*
- Needing to retell the story of your loved one's death
- Trying to avoid the topic in order to make others feel comfortable
- Excessively working out or engaging in physical activity
- Creating or building items or projects to occupied yourself
- *Constant thoughts of your loved one*



You
were my
other half...

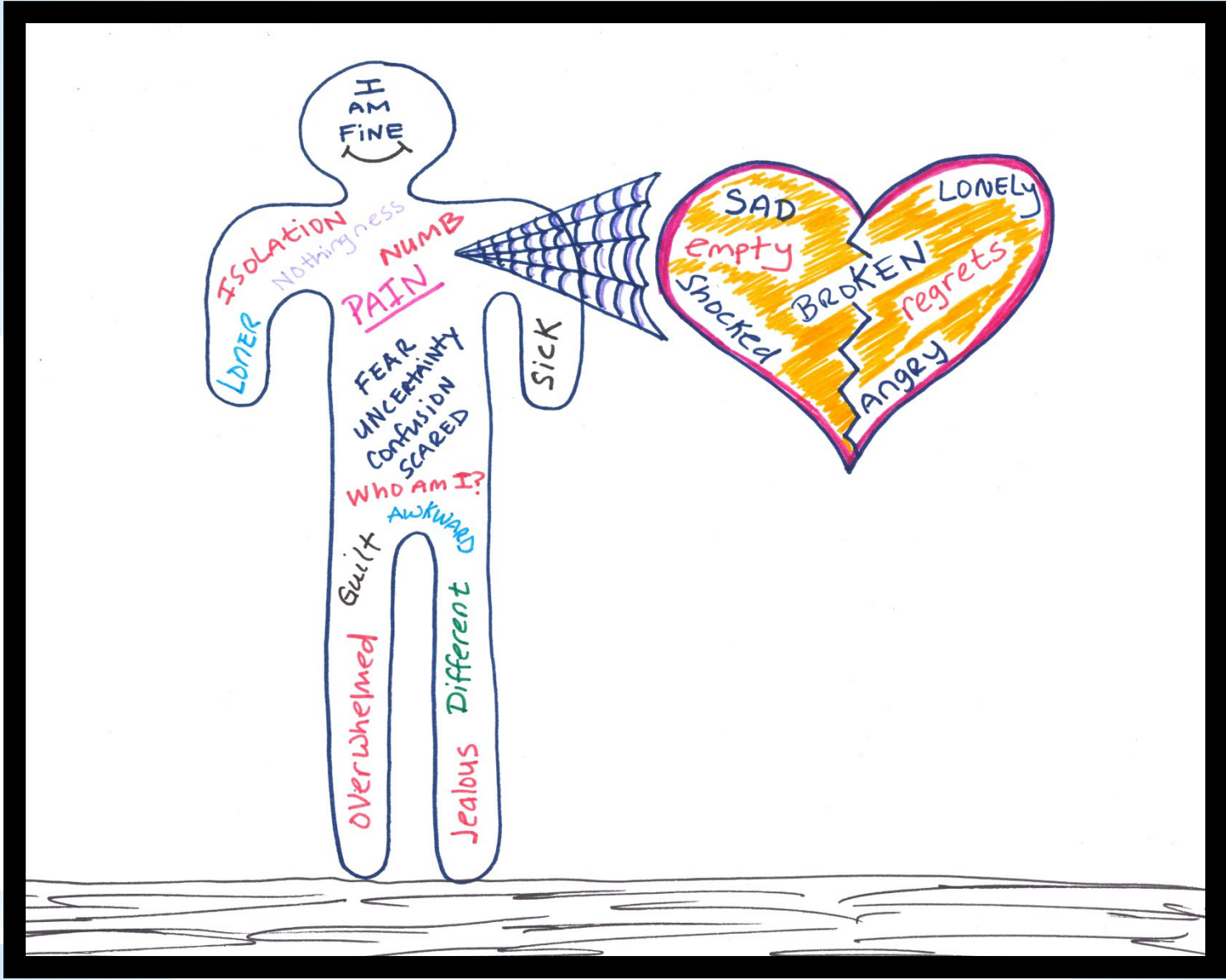
Common Grief Reactions

Social

- *Overly sensitive*
- Dependent
- *Withdrawn*
- Isolating
- Lack of initiative
- *Lack of interest*

Spiritually

- Lean in
- Lean away/question it
- Shelf it



I AM FINE

ISOLATION
Nothingness

LONER

NUMB
PAIN

FEAR
UNCERTAINTY
CONFUSION
SCARED

Who Am I?
Awkward

Guilt

Overwhelmed

Jealous
Different

SICK

SAD
empty
Shocked
BROKEN
regrets
ANGRY
LONELY

Bench Marks to Consider

- First few months
 - Death Notification
 - Funeral
 - Legal Paperwork/ Legal Process
 - Family and Friend Support
- First year
 - First birthday, holiday, and anniversary
 - Retelling your story
 - Redefining your role
 - Establishing new traditions
 - Entering deep grieving and mourning process
- Second year
 - Refining new traditions and roles
 - Still grieving

Adult Bereavement

- Adaptive versus maladaptive adjustment
 - 5 determinants
- They often feel like “no one can understand what they are going through”
- May struggle with guilt (rational and irrational)
- Gender differences
- Family dynamics
- Compromised functioning at home and work
- Grief via a violent death tend to be more intense and longer in duration
- Often needs education on coping skills
- Can use maladaptive coping skills such as drugs and alcohol that can exacerbate grief responses
- Questions existential ideals (What is life? Why am I here?)

Childhood Bereavement

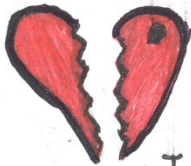
- All ages can handle the truth
- Use age appropriate language
- Allow them to participate in the funeral process
- They grieve through play
- Cyclical in nature
- Private grievers
- They still need normalcy, routine, and discipline
- They grieve in spurts (short in intensity but longer in duration)
- They often feel different
- At risk for short and long term maladaptive behaviors if not supported

Mom Rosey Jenna

I Never...



Got to see her eyes one last time.



I never knew my heart would break so much.



If she thinks about Roses!

Does she think about me and my dad?

I Wish...



I wish we got to make one more batch of brownies.

I wish I could've had more time with you.



What to Do and Say

Do:

- Check in and show up throughout the first year
- Help with practical things
- Sit there, listen, don't use words
- Use their loved one's name
- Remember special days and the date of death
- Be prepared to give 15-30 minutes of your time

Say:

- “I don't know what to say right now, but I am here for you.”
- “I am wondering if you would like to share with me about what you are going through?” or “Would you like to tell me about your loved one?”
- “How are you managing today?”
- “This sucks.” “This is terrible.” “This is the worst news.” “This is awful.”

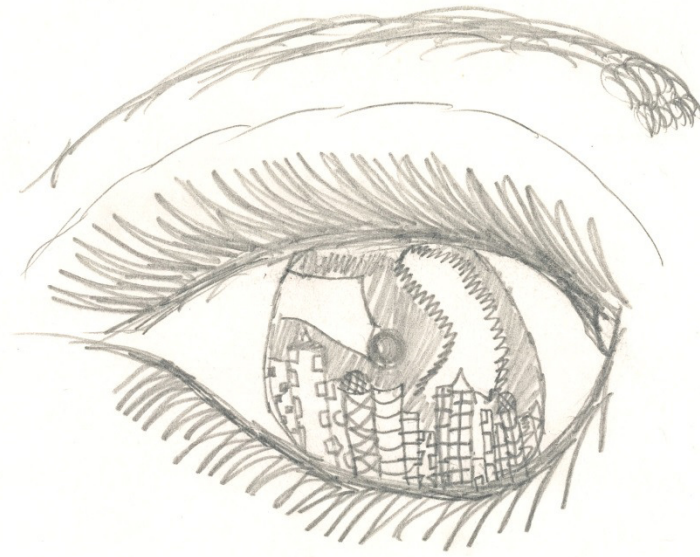
What Not to Do and Say

Don't:

- Not call, show up, or text your condolences
- Not talk about it
- Walk away or avoid me because you're uncomfortable
- Try to push me to "get over it" within the first year
- Rush me to get rid of personal belongings
- Get mad if I don't want to attend parties or special events
- Drop our friendship because I am acting different
- Bring it up during weird times where I might get triggered

Don't Say:

- Any clichés (let's name some)
- "I know how you feel, I lost my dog."
- Anything that starts with "you should" or "you shouldn't"
- "At least"
- I am sorry for your loss



"We see everything these days,
but we never see people hurting
on the inside."

When to Refer Out

- Always make referrals for grief support
 - at least 3 times within the first year
- When there are complicating factors like mental illness
- When there are many secondary losses
- When there are children involved
- When their functioning is severely impaired or compromised
- When they lack a support system
- If they are suicidal or are engaging in maladaptive coping skills

*The idea of complicated grief

What Grief has taught me

- I'm not alone
- I'm a strong person
- My family is always there for me.
- Never go to bed mad
- Love everyone even if you fight
- Don't take things for Granted
- Live every day like its your last
- No one can tell you how or what you feel.
- Love the little things in life.

Resources

- **The Center for Compassionate Care of The Elizabeth Hospice- 760-737-2050**

www.elizabethhospice.org

- **Private Therapists** (see who specialized in grief and loss)

www.psychologytoday.com

- **Centering Corp**-Online grief bookstore

www.centering.org

- **National Alliance for Grieving Children**

www.childrengrieve.org

- **Association of Death Educational and Counseling**

www.adec.org

- **Camp Erin**

www.moyerfoundation.org

- **Comfort Zone Camp**

www.comfortzonecamp.org

- **Center for Loss**

www.centerforloss.com

Thank you!
Questions?