

## SOME GRIEF PROCESSES

| TIME  | CHARACTERISTICS   | SPECIAL NEEDS  | TASKS   |
|---|---|--|---|
| One week, several weeks or months   | Cognitive confusion. Not yet comprehend full significance of loss. Experience like a bad dream. Feeling of numbness, trance-likeness, blunting of feelings, yet sensitive to hurts.   | Support from loved ones but not over-support. Need emotional distance and some solitude and privacy.   | Maintaining integrity of self. Not to fall apart. Carry out day-to-day functions.   |
| Many months<br><br>Phase I — Accepting<br><br>Phase II — Yearning<br><br>Phase III — Disorganization<br>Despair                                     | Usually most difficult time. Shock has diminished. People not around like earlier. May experience aimlessness, depression, loneliness, frenzied activity, apathy, fatigue, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, poor memory, frequent weeping, feelings of craziness, self-pity, anger, guilt, resentment. May experience hallucinations or presence of loved one through voice, vision, dreams of deceased. Some have desire to contact dead through seance, death wish, hostility to God. | Desire to talk about deceased and details of death. Need to be reassured all was done to help the one who died. Importance of support groups and individuals. Begin to normalize life again. | Admit and accept reality of the loss. See the experience in the perspective of one's past, present and future. Renew relationships. |
| Several weeks or months<br>Two or more years possible, especially in suicide or child death, murder, sudden death.<br><br>Phase IV — Reorganization | Greater sense of peace and stability. Regaining a sense of a fruitful and hopeful future. Painful memories may crop up occasionally. Mourning process reaching completion.  | Putting "one's house in order" (financial, legal, etc.). Move toward normalization.  | Seek work or activities to give life meaning. Restore ego integrity. Recognize value of faith.                                      |

There is no right way or wrong way to grieve. As each person lives uniquely, so each grieves uniquely. Thus the times, states, variety and intensity of one's grief will vary. The above information is not a construction of the right way to grieve, but some guidelines to help persons be sensitive to significant dynamics and dimensions of grief. The six Ts of grieving: Tears, Talk, Touch, Trust, Toil, Time.

THE GRIEF PROCESS

"Yea, though I WALK THROUGH the valley of the shadow of death, ....."

DEATH/LOSS

SHOCK

TASKS OF MOURNING

#1. Accept the reality of the loss

DENIAL/NUMBNESS

FANTASY VERSUS REALITY

FLOOD OF GRIEF/  
EMOTIONAL RELEASE

PHYSICAL DISTRESS

DEPRESSION

GUILT/REGRET

#4. To reinvest emotional energy into another or other relationships.

GETTING ON WITH LIFE/  
REAFFIRMATION OF LIFE

OR  
(Pathology or physical illness)

NEW IDENTITY  
EMERGING

HOPE/MEANING

OLD PATTERNS VS. NEW ONES

#3. To adjust to the environment.

"TELLING THE STORY"

SELECTIVE MEMORY  
AND STABBING PAIN

CONFUSION/FOGGINESS

PANIC/ANXIETY

Compiled from various sources: Wayne Oates' Stages, J. Wm. Warden's Tasks of Mourning, Erich Lindemann's Stages, and Gennep's (VAN DER KEMP'S THEORY)