

GRIEF AND HEALING: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE EXAMPLES FROM REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES

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What holds the story together – besides Marcellus' tentacles – is Tova.

Her son disappeared without a trace when he was just 18. Her husband has passed away. She's alone – and yet she's not.

She has friends, she has a job, she makes sure she has purpose.

And yet she also has concerns about what will happen to her when she can't live on her own anymore.

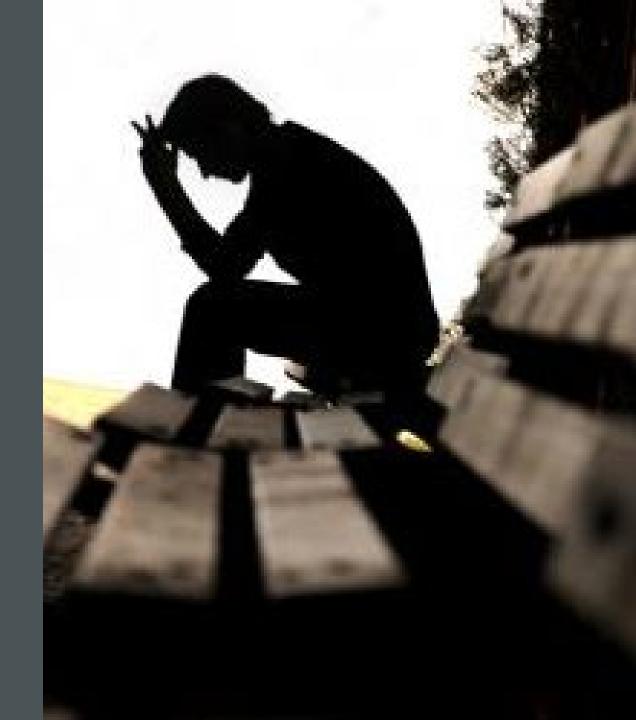
We will use <u>Tova's experience with grief</u> in our talk this evening and examine it from a psychological perspective...



DEFINING GRIEF

GRIEF

- According to John Bowlby (1960), grief is the physical, emotional, somatic, cognitive, and spiritual response to actual or threatened loss of a person, thing or place to which we are emotionally attached.
- We grieve because we are biologically willed to be <u>attached</u>.



FUNCTIONS OF GRIEF

- To make the outer reality of the loss into an internally accepted reality
- To lessen the emotional attachment to the lost person or object
- To make it possible for the bereaved person to become attached to other people or objects



SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

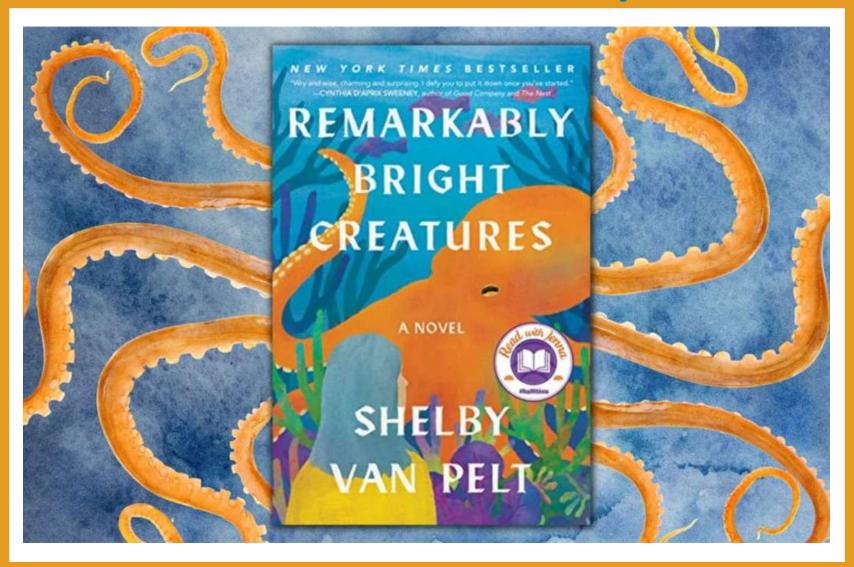
- Grief is expressed physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually
 - Physical expressions—headaches, loss of appetite, difficulty in sleeping, weakness, fatigue, nausea, aches, pains, headaches, and palpitations
 - **Emotional expressions**—feelings of sadness and yearning. But feelings of worry, anxiety, frustration, anger, guilt are also normal
 - **Social expressions**—feeling detached from others, isolating oneself from social contact, and behaving in ways that are atypical of the individual.
 - Spiritual expressions—questioning the reason for loss, the purpose of pain and suffering, and the purpose of life, and meaning of death.



GRIEF RESPONSE

- Several factors influencing grief response
 - The bereaved person was strongly dependent on deceased
 - A love-hate relationship existed between bereaved and lost
 - The bereaved has experience several recent losses
 - The loss of a child
 - The bereaved person holds themselves responsible for loss

Let's review some examples....



FACTORS AFFECTING GRIEF

- The following factors affect the grief reaction
 - Whether the death is expected or unexpected
 - Tova's husband, Will, died of cancer
 - Tova's son, Erik, sudden death
 - The personality of the bereaved
 - Tova is strong and independent—works at Sowell Bay Aquarium
 - The age of the bereaved
 - Tova is in late adulthood, age 70,—death is expected and a natural part of the life cycle at this stage

FACTORS AFFECTING GRIEF

- The following factors affect the grief reaction
 - Gender of the bereaved
 - Women generally outlive men (age 79 versus age 73 years) (CDC, 2021)
 - Across all species: **Fun fact about the Giant Pacific Octopus: The male will live for a few months after mating before dying. The female has a similar lifespan but stays alive slightly longer to guard her eggs. After the eggs hatch, she will die.
 - Women are also more likely to express feelings of grief, reach out for social support, and talk about the loss of a child
 - The bereaved are among of social support
 - Tova spends time with her social group—The "Knit-Wits," and builds relationships with Ethan and Cameron

TYPES OF GRIEF

TYPES OF GRIEF

- Many types of grief....
 - Anticipatory grief
 - Normal or common grief
 - Complicated grief
 - Prolonged or chronic grief
 - Disenfranchised grief
 - Delayed grief
 - Absent grief
 - Traumatic grief
 - Exaggerated grief



@YAMHS

8 TYPES OF GRIEF



ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

It's possible to feel grief before loss actually happens, for example, if you know someone who has a terminal disease, the emotion may start to creep in before they pass away.



COMPLICATED GRIEF

Complicated grief is characterised by irrational thoughts and may also be expressed as avoidance behaviour (for example, by avoiding things that remind the griever of the person or situation that have been lost). It is a more constant feeling.



Delayed grief seems to be more common when losing a loved one happens alongside other significant changes, such as losing a job or a house, developing health problems, or when the griever feels they are the strong family member and must focus on caring for others.

ABSENT GRIEF

This is similar to inhibited grief in that the person silences their feelings and carries on as if nothing has happened, but absent grief is a more extreme version that revolves around avoidance or denial.



'NORMAL' GRIEF

Some people carry on with their normal routine despite the feelings of grief. From the outside it may seem as if the person has not been affected by it, but pain, numbness and other feelings are still present under the 'normal' surface.



DELAYED GRIEF

Delayed grief seems to be more common when losing a loved one happens alongside other significant changes, such as losing a job or a house, developing health problems, or when the griever feels they are the strong family member and must focus on caring for others.



Disenfranchised grief may happen after losing a pet, a non-family member, or a part of ourselves (such as losing the function of a body part after an accident).



EXAGGERATED GRIEF

Exaggerated grief is similar to complicated grief in that sorrow and the inability to function don't improve over time. This may be the result of experiencing several losses at the same time or over a short period of time, so the griever feels lost and unable to cope.

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

- Occur when death is expected.
 - E.g., Tova's husband, Will, dying of cancer
- Anticipatory grief has been defined as the "total set of cognitive, affective, and cultural, and social reactions of expected death felt by patient and family"
- The following aspects have been identified among survivors
 - Depression
 - Heightened concern for dying person
 - Attempts to adjust to the consequences of death

NORMAL OR COMMON GRIEF

- Begins soon after a loss and symptoms go away over time.
- Marked by graduate movement toward acceptance of loss and although daily functioning can be very difficult, managing to continue with basic daily activities.
- Includes some common emotional reactions that include emotional numbness, shock, disbelief, and/or denial often occurring immediately after the death, especially if death is unexpected

- Normal or common grief appears to occur in 50 to 85% of people following a loss, is time-limited, begins soon after a loss, and largely resolves with in the first one-two years.
 - HOWEVER, 10-20% can't move on and may experience different types of grief...

THE 4 TYPES OF GRIEF

There is no one path for grief. There are several ways your grief can play out.



 Traumatic Grief: Grief that may occur following a violent or sudden death or if the person who died was young.



- 2. Delayed Grief: If you struggle to process your grief right away, you experience grief months or even years later.
- 3. Disenfranchised Grief: You may struggle to discuss the death or loss openly due to stigma, leading you to grieve silently.



4. Complicated Grief: Chronic, intense grief that can disrupt your everyday life and require professional help to resolve.

What Is Complicated Grief?

Complicated grief, also known as complicated bereavement, chronic grief, or complicated grief disorder, involves experiencing symptoms of grief that intensify instead of subside over time. After the death of a loved one, including the loss of a parent, a miscarriage, or the loss of a child, experiencing the associated seven stages of grief are normal.

SYMPTOMS OF COMPLICATED GRIEF

People respond very differently to traumatic events, such as a death, often making it difficult to identify signs of debilitating grief.



Risk factors for complicated grief

- Loss of a child
- Loss of a **spouse or partner** with whom the person had a very strong and fulfilling relationship
- Past history of **mood or anxiety disorders**
- Past history of **trauma or loss**
- The loss was caused by **homicide or** suicide
- Negative circumstances surrounding the death, like failure to be present, or arguments with family members
- Financial hardship related to the loss
 - SingleCare*

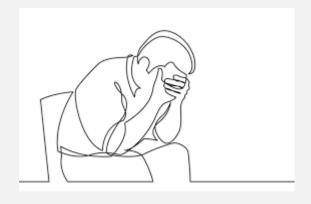
- Tova's experience when her estranged brother, Lars, died
 - Tova visits Charter Village after hearing of Lar's passing away...
 - "First of all, please let me say, I'm sorry for your loss." (Bruce LaRue, attorney for Lars' estate). "We were not close," Tova explains again" (p. 61).

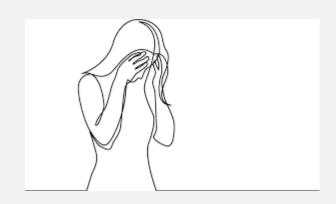
Disenfranchised Grief

Recognizing and Supporting Stigmatized Grief

Hear the stories about:
Infertility
Miscarriage
Pet loss
Grandparent loss
Sibling loss







- Let's discuss...
 - Have you known anyone who has experienced any of these types of grief? What has been your observation?



MODELS AND STAGES OF GRIEF

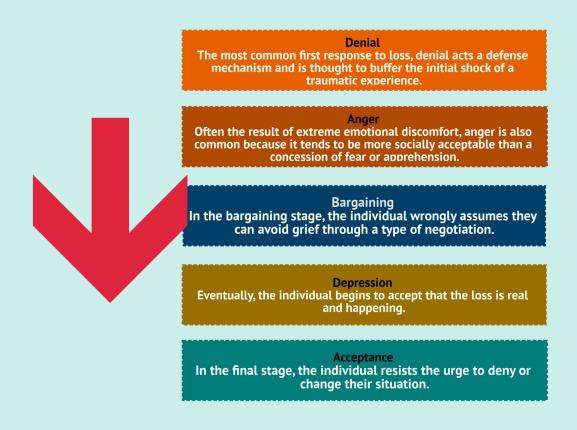


Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist Died: August 24, 2004 (aged 78)

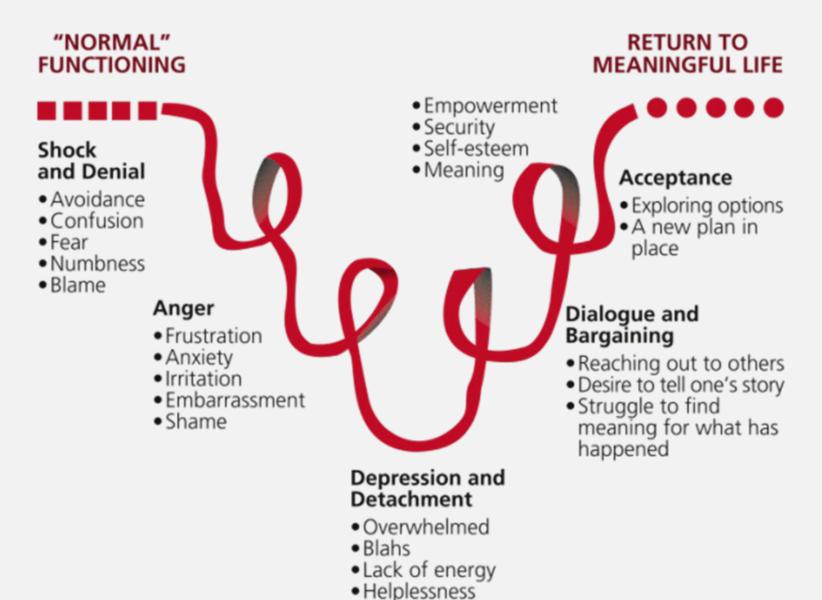
• Elisabeth Kubler-Ross (1969), in extensive research with terminally ill patients, identified five stages of feelings and behaviors that individuals experience in response to a real perceive or anticipated loss.

The Five Stages of Grief Model In A Nutshell

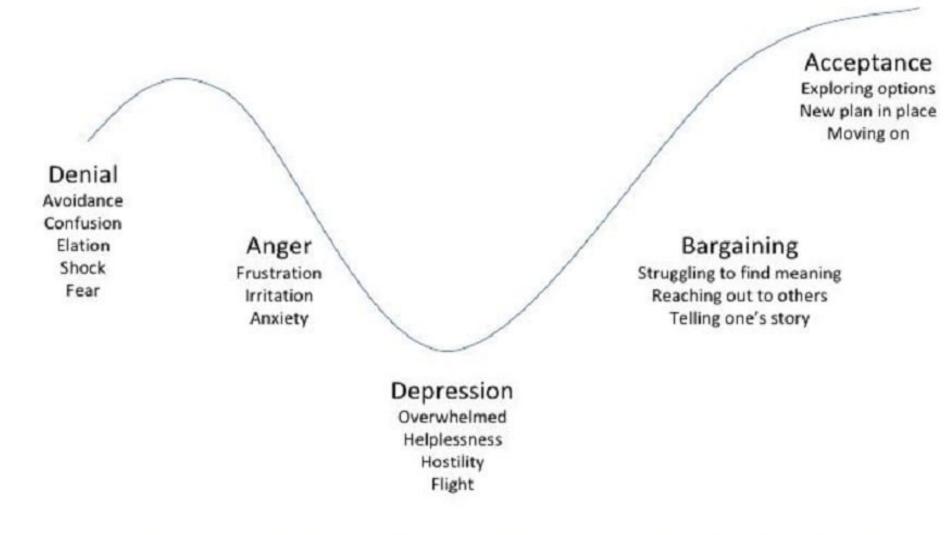
The Five Stages of Grief model was developed by Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book On Death and Dying. For this reason, it is sometimes referred to as the Kübler-Ross model. The Five Stages of Grief model suggests an individual transition through five distinct stages after experiencing loss: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.



Stages of the Grief Cycle



Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle



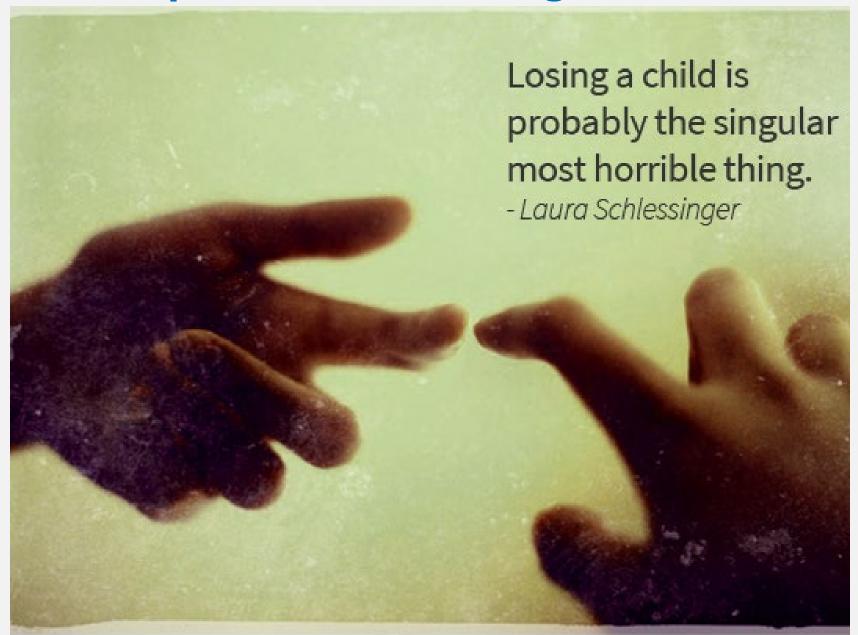
7 Stages of Grief

(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

Shock*	• Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
Denial	• Trying to avoid the inevitable.
Anger	• Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.
Bargaining	• Seeking in vain for a way out.
Depression	• Final realization of the inevitable.
Testing*	• Seeking realistic solutions.
Acceptance	• Finally finding the way forward.

^{*}This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and to facilitate change.

Tova's experience with losing her son, Erik



STAGE MODEL OF GRIEF

Shock and Denial

- People may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid pain. Shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at one. This may last for weeks.
 - Tova denied her son was really gone after he disappeared as well as how he died.
 - "Erik's prints were on the rudder. Evidence was thin, but it all pointed to the boy taking his own life, the sheriff said. The neighbors said. The newspaper said. Everyone said. Tova has never believed that. Not for one minute" (p. 19).

2. Pain and Guilt

- As the shock wears off, it is replaced with the suffering of unbelievable pain. Although excruciating and almost unbearable, it is important that one experiences the pain fully, and does not hide it, avoid it or escape from it with substances. The person may feel guilty over lack of experiences and time spent with loved ones. Life may feel chaotic and scary during this phase.
 - Tova has intense feelings of guilt, regret and pain. She also experiences complicated, unresolved and prolonged grief about not spending more time with her son—specifically not knowing "the girl"
 - "There was a girl...If Erik hadn't died that night, the girl might have been a daughter. Or an in law...Whoever she was, Erik hadn't cared for her enough to mention her. This last thought, as usual stings..." (p. 237).

3. Anger and Bargaining

- Frustration gives way to anger, and the person may lash out and place blame for death on someone else
 - Tova blames herself and Will for Erik's death—angry that he died suddenly and questions if their choices would have made a difference in preventing Erik's death
 - "She and Will had gone to the grocery store the afternoon the day Erik died. Tova remembers buying a box of those junky cream-filled snack cakes Erik always liked. Had Will chose the slow checkout lane that day? If he'd picked the faster one, would they have arrived home in time to see Erik before he left for his job at the ferry dock? Would they have caught him sneaking beer from the fridge? Would he have mentioned that he was seeing a girl now? Would he have told Tova her name was Daphne and he couldn't wait to bring her over for supper? Would any of this have changed anything?" (p. 271)

4. "Depression," Reflection, and Loneliness

- Normative stage of grief. Encouragement from others is not helpful during this stage.
 During this time, an individual may realize the true magnitude of loss and depression sets in. The individual may isolate and reflect on memories from the past
 - Tova constantly ruminates her choices on the day of Erik's death, cannot throw away his childhood toys
 - "Tova wanted to donate Erik's baby toys, but Mama insisted: save them for your grandchildren one day. So Tova stashed them in the attic. They remained there after Erik died. They remain there now. The only thing's changed is the dormer window. Will had it replaced. It was a few years after Erik died, and Will had an incident. The sort of thing grief can do to a person. Tova doesn't like to think about the incident. That wasn't Will's norm. But then nothing is normal when you lose a child" (p. 140).
 - Tova sorting through her estranged brother's, Lars' personal items—after his death (found a photo and cannot bring herself to throw it away)
 - "It was Lars who taught Erik to sail. Showed him every trick in the book, a solution to every improbable nautical scenario. Such as, how to leave an anchor rope cut clear. **This photo hurt to look at.** Tova nearly tossed it in the rash but stopped at the last minute and buried it in the back of her kitchen drawer that held pot holders and towels, even thought it didn't belong there either" (p. 85).
 - She also hides her grief and emotions from her support group—the Knit-Wits.
 - "These women have always worn motherhood big and loud on their chests, but Tova keeps hers inside, sunk deep in her guts like an old bullet. Private" (p. 18).

5. The upward turn

- As a person starts to adjust to life without their lost loved one, life may be calmer and more organized. Physical symptoms may lessen, and "depression" begins to lift slightly.
 - Tova had to adjust to living alone. She Begins to work at the Sowell Bay Aquarium to keep herself busy as is the oldest employee. She also spends time with the "Knit-Wits" for support.
 - "Each night, she mops the floors, wipes down the glass, and empties trash bins. Every two weeks, she retrieves direct-deposit stub from her cubby in the break room..." (p. 4)
 - "Tova's bank account would cover her modest needs several times over. She
 does not need charity from anyone..." (p. 16).
 - Terry, Tova's boss, is grateful for having Tova work at the aquarium
 - "...When I hired you. I didn't have much of a choice. I knew you wouldn't take no for an answer...You're a very strong woman, Tova..."
 "...Yes, well. It's good to stay busy..." (p. 316)

6. Reconstruction and Working Through

- As the individual becomes more functional, the mind starts working again and will find seeking realistic solutions to problems posed by life without loved one. The person may start to work on practical and financial problems and reconstruct oneself without loved one.
 - Dual-process model for effective coping—Tova's experience dealing with financial stressors after her husband, Will's, passing.
 - Loss-oriented stressors negative and positive reappraisal of loss
 - Restoration-oriented stressors secondary stressors that emerge as direct outcomes
 - "A man's average lifespan is several years shorter than an average woman's, and Tova has always considered this a quite injustice. Will's death was relatively straightforward, at least for Will himself. The cancer, the hospitalization, the treatments: all of that was awful, but then nearly as terrible had been the paperwork, the insurance appeals, the arrangements. Tova had spent hours along at the kitchen table, late at night, trying her best to sort it out" (p. 128)."
- Tova is spending more time with Ethan—"investing" in her friendship. She replaces Ethan's 't-shirt'
 - "There's no need to get upset...I'm simply replacing the item I ruined...It was just a T-shirt...It was important to you..." (p. 285).
- She is also spending more time with Cameron working at the aquarium and builds her bond with Marcelles, the octopus.

7. Acceptance and Hope

During this final stage, the person learns to accept and deal with the reality of the situation.
 Acceptation does not mean instant happiness. Given the pain and turmoil one has experienced, the person can never return to the carefree, untroubled life that existed before loss. But they will find a way forward.

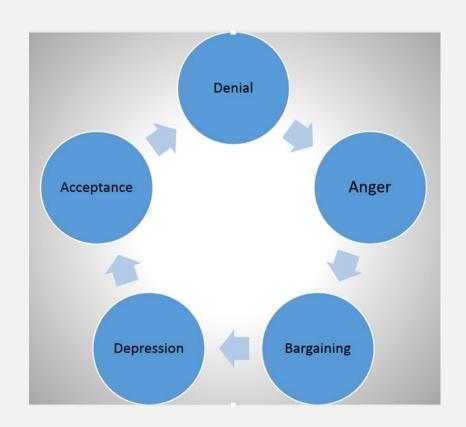
Tova has closure about Erik's death

- "I wish you could tell me...she will always wish this. But even knowing what happened that night can't bring him back. Nothing can..." (p. 289).
- Tova realizes the impact Marcelles had on her life—reuniting her with Cameron, her grandson and saying goodbye and he is released back into the ocean
 - "You led me to him, My grandson...You tried to tell me, and I wasn't listening. After a deep breath, she goes on. We must say goodbye, friend. But I'm glad Terry saved you, because you saved me" (p. 333).
 - "When they circle back to the pier, Tova slips away and stands at the railings, alone. To the somber bay that took them both, a cherished son and an exceptional octopus, she whispers inscrutably: I miss you. Both of you. She taps her heart" (p. 355).

Tova embraces her new relationship with her grandson, Cameron

• "Tova has never been much of a hugger, but when Cameron's face starts to break apart, she finds herself pulled to him like a magnet. His arms wrap around her neck, squeezing her against his chest. For what seems like a very long time, she rests her cheek against his sternum, which is warm. She can't help but notice that his T-shirt appears to be stained and smells oddly like motor oil. Perhaps that's intentional? Never again will Tova make assumptions about a T-shirt. I am a grandmother. I have a grandson" (p. 344).

- Let's discuss...
 - Have you ever seen anyone experience any of these stages of grief?
 - Did the stages happen in the same order?
 - What was that experience like? Similar to Tova's?







GRIEF REACTIONS OVER THE LIFESPAN

EARLY CHILDHOOD AGES 2-6 YEARS

- A child of this age is **egocentric** (**self focused**), believing that the world revolves around them. The death of a loved one will be very self-focused, where the child believes that they are **responsible for the death**.
- They might feel abandoned and grief of losing a loved one as part of a disaster or crisis even may interrupt age-appropriate activities and force a child to address issues for which they child is not developmentally prepared.
- Emotions presented can vary greatly from sadness, anger, anxiety, and guilt.



Ages 2-5

- Concept of Death
 - Death seen as reversible
- Grief Response
 - Intensive response but brief
 - Very present oriented
 - Most aware of changes in patterns of care
 - Asking questions repeatedly



Ages 4-7

- Concept of Death
 - Death still seen as reversible
 - Feeling of responsibility because of wishes and thoughts
- Grief Response
 - More verbalization
 - Great concern with process. How? Why?
 - May act as though nothing has happened
 - General distress and confusion





MIDDLE AND LATE CHILDHOOD AGES 6-12 YEARS

School age children at this stage learn basic skills but attach their cultural values to it.

Death of a loved one during a disaster or crisis can result in a child not wanting to leave home, hoping to reassure the safety of others.

For the school aged child, like the younger child, grief crisis may interrupt ageappropriate activities and force a child to address issues for which the child is not developmentally prepared.

Children at this age might believe that certain behavior will bring loved ones back. They might be preoccupied with fear. They might also experience sadness, anger, anxiety, and guilt.

Ages 7-11

- Concept of Death
 - Still wanting to see death as reversible but beginning to see it as

final

- Death seen as punishment
- Grief Response
 - Specific questions
 - Desire for complete detail
 - What is the right way to respond?
 - Starting to have ability to mourn and understand mourning

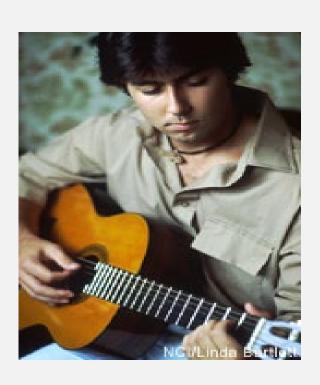
THE ADOLESCENT AGES 13-19 YEARS

- Adolescents often deal with self-esteem and identity issues. They want to differentiate from their parents.
- If they lose a loved one during a disaster or crisis, they might feel guilty because of what they might have said to the person before they died.
- Adolescents just like the young and school age child may experience the interruption of age-appropriate activities.
- Adolescents often express their grief and loss issues through body language and acting behaviors. In addition, they may be internally preoccupied with death, which might be manifested through poor academic performance.



Ages 11-18

- Concept of Death
 - Ability to abstract
 - Beginning to conceptualize death
- Grief Response
 - Extreme sadness
 - Denial
 - Regression
 - More often willing to talk to people outside of family and peer support
 - Risk-taking



THE YOUNG ADULT, AGES 20-40 YEARS

- Young adults can be devastated by death of a loved one. For example, losing one's child can be paralyzing for parents. The parents may blame themselves for not protecting their child (e.g., TOVA) better.
- Their emotions might range greatly and include such things such as loneliness, sadness, disbelief, anger, anxiety, etc.
- Young adults losing a spouse or partner might feel emptiness and isolation and their social connections might change as they are no longer a couple but an individual.
- Losing a spouse or partner at this age means not only grieving but assuming the (often unfamiliar) responsibilities and roles of the deceased and may include helping children through grief.



THE MIDDLE-AGED ADULT, AGES 40-60 YEARS

Middle aged adults, like young adults, can be badly impacted by loss of loved one.

They might grief the loss of their children and potential future grandchildren.

They might feel guilty for not having been able to protect their children (Tova). Losing a spouse or partner can leave middle aged adults with (often unfamiliar) responsibilities and roles, experiencing financial hardship, and/or dealing with grieving children.

Middle aged adults might grieve future plans for retiring together.





LATE ADULTHOOD, AGE 65 PLUS YEARS

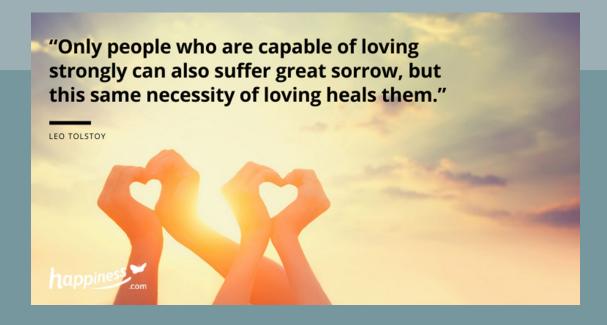
- Elderly adults, often have experienced multiple losses, such as jobs, health, independence, social roles, familiar living surrounds, and loved ones. Although loss is often expected during this age, unexpected losses of children and/or spouses or partners can be detrimental, since children are often also caregivers.
- Loss of a spouse or partner might result in feeling more dependent on others.
 Often the elder adult lacks the social support needed, which can be detrimental during this time.







COPING WITH GRIEF



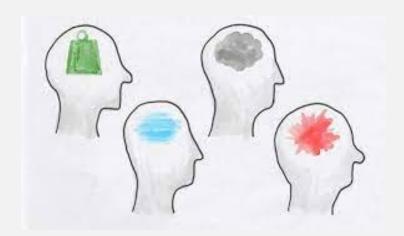
HOW LONG DOES GRIEF LAST?

- The length of grief process is different for everyone. There is no predicable schedule for grief.
- The grief process cannot be rushed even though it can be painful at times.
- It is normal for significant dates, holidays, or other reminders to trigger feelings related to loss.



DOES GRIEF AFFECT PEOPLE DIFFERENTLY?

- Different cultures and religions see death, loss, and grief in different ways
- Expressions of grief and the meaning to loss will be based one one's own beliefs and view of the world



HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OTHERS WHO ARE GRIEVING?

- Be a good listener
- Ask about their feelings
- Sit with them
- Share your feelings
- Ask about their loss

- Make phone calls
- Acknowledge the pain
- Let them feel sad
- Be available when we can
- Do not minimize grief

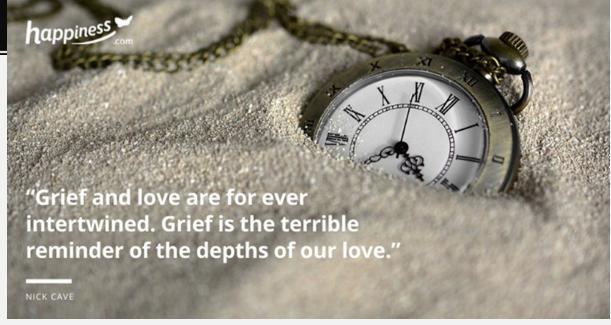
HOW TO COPE WITH GRIEF

Engage in Seek social counseling activities Good Exercise nutrition Seek spiritual Take time to support relax Listen to Join a support music group Let feel grief Be patient



The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not "get over" the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to.

— Elisabeth Kubler-Ross —



"Humans. For the most part, you are dull and blundering. But occasionally, you can be remarkably bright creatures."

-Shelby Van Pelt Remarkably Bright Creatures



