

## Understanding and Working with Grief

*Good...  
...Grief*

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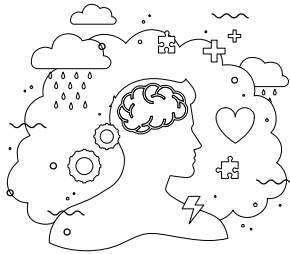
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### What exactly is grief?



An ongoing, inevitable process through which you learn to live with a loss

...but wait, *is that all?*

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### Grief isn't just about death

The Grief Recovery Method defines grief as both...

"The conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a family pattern of behavior"

as well as

"intangible grief."



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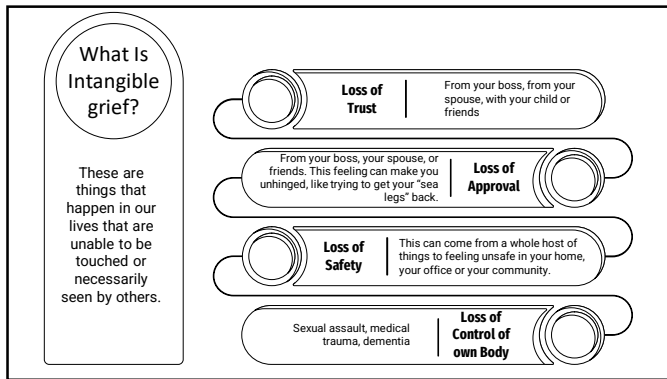
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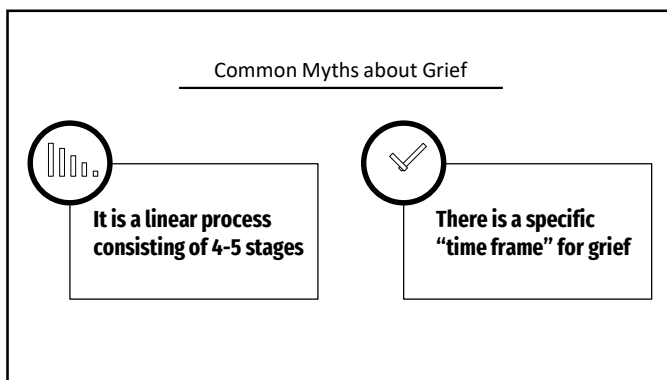
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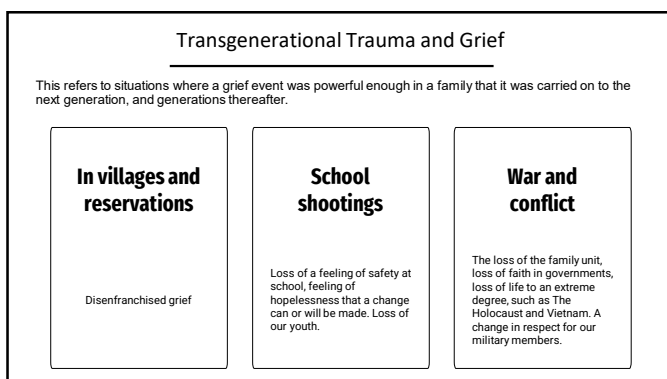
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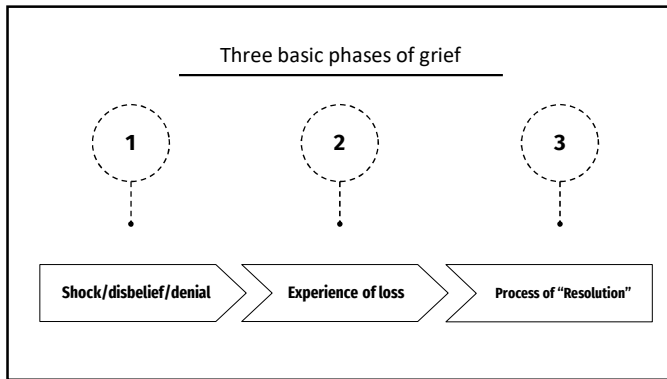
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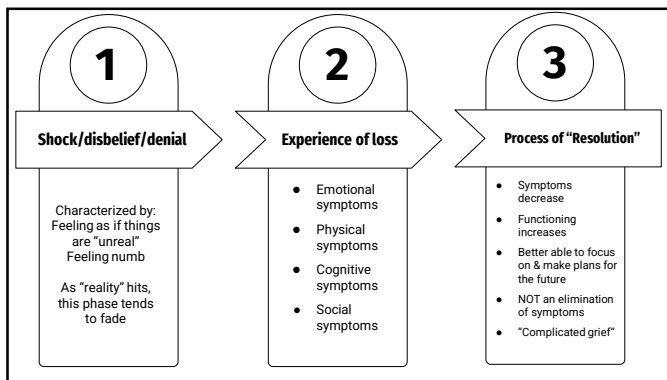
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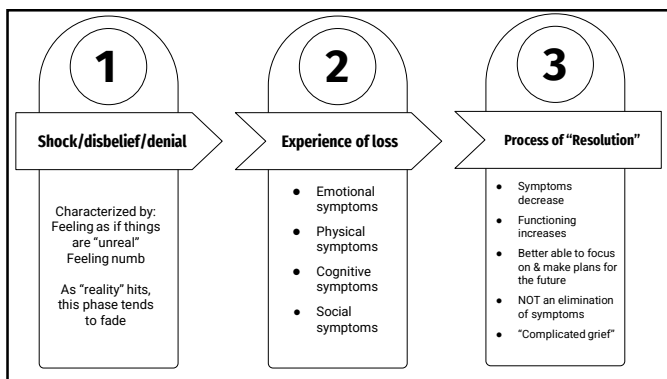
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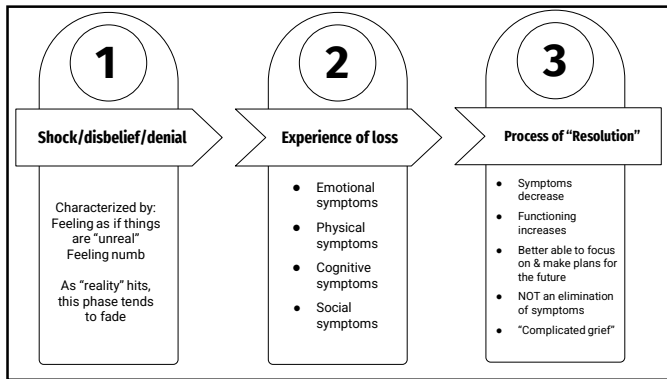
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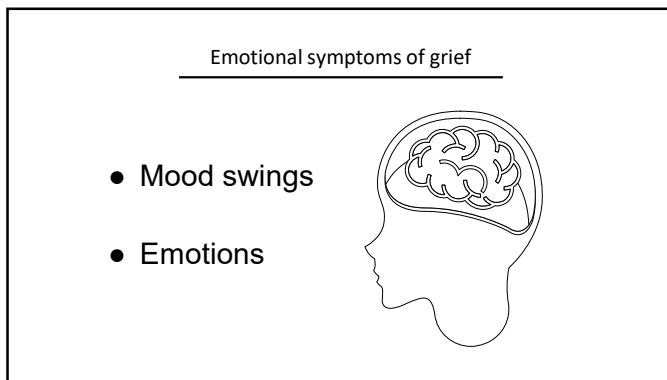
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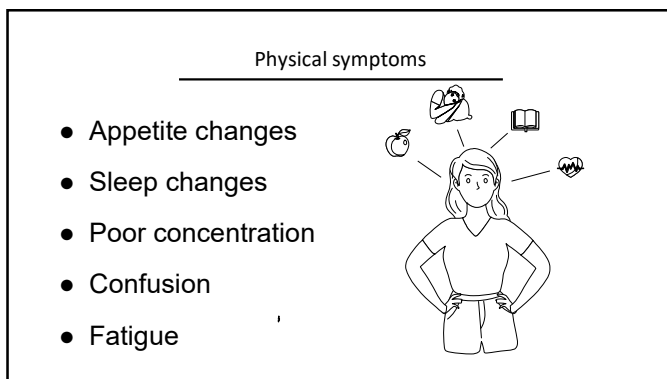
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### Cognitive symptoms

- Preoccupation
  - With person who has died
  - With circumstances of the loss
- Identification with the deceased
- Existential questions
- Questioning faith



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### Social "symptoms"

- Isolation from others
- Taking care of others
- Throwing oneself into work
- All one can talk about is the loss

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### How one grieves depends upon

- Individual coping skills
- Religious and cultural beliefs
- History of additional losses
- Support system
- Relationship with the deceased
- Unresolved feelings or "issues"

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### How one grieves depends upon (continued)

#### Circumstances of the death

- Sudden illness
- Sudden accident
- Prolonged illness
- Social stigma
  - Death by suicide
- Situations others may not understand

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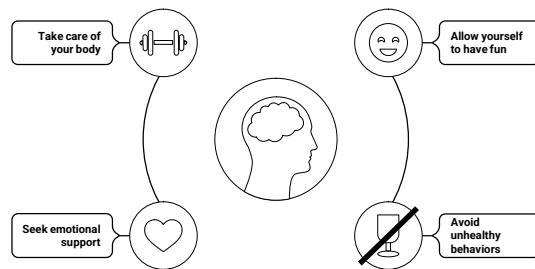
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### How to help yourself



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### When to seek professional help

- It is always okay to seek professional help
  - You do not need to be in crisis for therapy to be helpful
  - Compounded experiences of loss
  - Feeling suicidal or increasingly depressed

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When to seek professional help (continued)

- **Some urgent signs of needing help:**
  - Significant changes in sleep or appetite
  - Difficulty functioning at home or work
  - Unresolved issues with the deceased
  - Compounded experiences of loss
  - Feeling suicidal or increasingly depressed

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How therapy can help

- **Adults**
  - Somewhere safe to talk
  - Increased understanding of deeper layers

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How therapy can help

- **Children**
  - Therapist is a grown-up who isn't grieving too
  - Trained to understand communication

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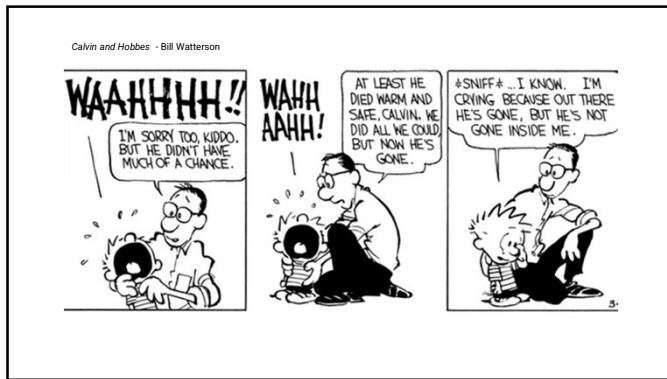
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### Children and grief

- Different from adults
- Influenced by:
  - Age & stage of development
  - Personality
  - Relationship with deceased
  - Prior experiences with death
  - Ability to express feelings
  - Parents' ability to cope with child's upset

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### Understanding of death by age range

- Infants and Toddlers
- 3-6: Death is like sleep; temporary
- 6-9: Death happens to "old people"
- 9+ : Death happens to everyone

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### Children's response to death

- Asking questions
- "Magical thinking"
- Fear of bad things happening
- Preoccupied with health
- Anger & acting out
- Play themes
  - Death
  - Abandonment

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### Tips for helping grieving children

1. Be honest
2. Answer questions directly
3. Give age-appropriate answers
4. Use words like "die," "death," name of illness
5. Acknowledge & normalize feelings
6. Use books and stories to help children talk

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### Children and Funerals

- Do not force children to go
- Let them know what to expect
- Allow them to participate
- Consider other rituals to say goodbye

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Contact information

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