

# Understanding Grief, Loss, and the Impact on Caregivers

Carly Nichols, LMSW, APHSW-C  
Support Services Manager  
CareFirst

# Who is CareFirst?



Hospice



Palliative Care



Grief Services



The Clinic at CareFirst

# What is Grief?

***Grief is the physical, emotional, 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 attach."*  
(John Bowlby, Father of Attachment Theory)

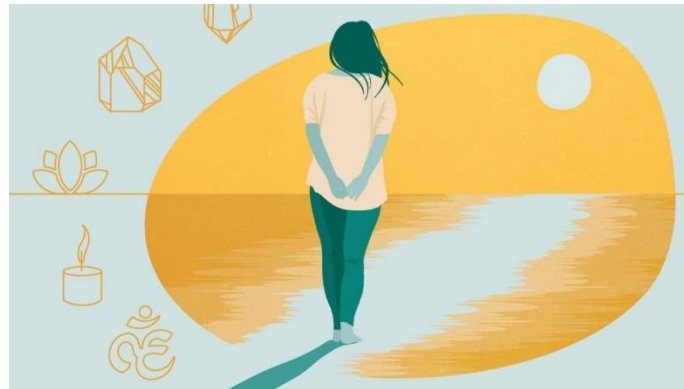
# Our Approach to Grief

- Grief is a normal and natural response to loss
- Grief is not a problem to be solved, but a process to be experienced
  - There is no time table for grief
- Everyone grieves in their own individual way



# Examples of Loss

- Failing Health/Terminal Illness
- Death of a Pet
- Death following a Terminal Illness
- Death Due to War and Combat
- Sudden Loss
- Loss of a Home or Business
- Death of a friend or family member



# How Does Grief Manifest?



Physical

Emotional

Mental/Cognitive

Behavioral

Social

Spiritual



# 5 Stages of Grief

The foundation of grief research was done by Kubler- Ross and is known as the 5 stages of Grief...

**Denial/Shock**

**Anger**

**Bargaining**

**Grieving**

**Acceptance**

## The Grief Spiral (Circle) John Bowlby

Model: The Circle of Grief



## Four Tasks of Grief and Mourning William Worden

- Task I: To Accept the Reality of the Loss
- Task II: To Process the Pain of Grief
- Task III: To Adjust to a World Without the Deceased
- Task IV: To Find an Enduring Connection With the Deceased in the Midst of Embarking on a New Life



# Types of Grief

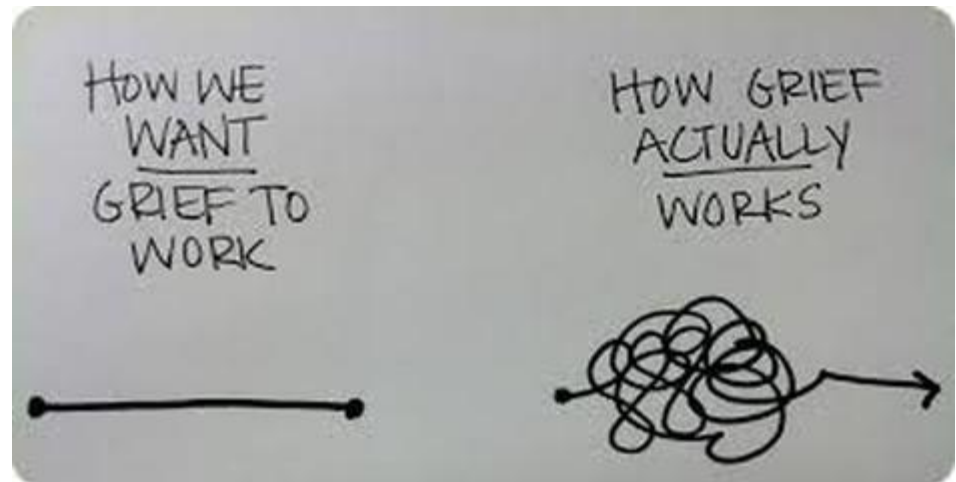
- Normal
- Anticipatory
- Complicated
- Cumulative
- Disenfranchised
- Chronic
- Delayed



**Complicated Grief** occurs when there are multiple factors influencing ones ability to grieve appropriately

This can include:

- Loss of a spouse
- Loss of a home
- Loss of job; etc.
- Caregivers



- Perceived lack of social support
- Other concurrent crises or stressors
- An extremely dependent relationship
- Circumstances of death which are unexpected, untimely, sudden or shocking
- Shifting of Roles

# What is the difference between grief and depression?



# Grief vs. Depression

## Grief

- Sadness
- Crying
- Anger
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Denial
- Numbness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Relief
- Yearning
- Rumination over the Loss
- Sleep disturbance

## Depression

- Thoughts of suicide
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Slow speech and body movements
- Inability to function at work, home, and/or school.
- Disruption in sleep
- Loss of appetite (extreme)
- Lack of interest (extreme)
- Lack of motivation
- Inability to find pleasure in activities

- Sadness
- Crying
- Tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Numbness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disturbance
- Difficulty functioning
- Rumination

## Symptoms related to grief typically:

- Decrease in intensity over the days and weeks following
- Often comes in “waves” and tend to be directly associated with thoughts or reminders of the loved one
- Positive emotions and humor are present at times
  - Self-Esteem is generally preserved
- Thoughts of death are focused on the deceased and may present as wanting to “join them”

# Styles of Grieving

While everyone grieves in their own way, there are two main "styles" of grieving

Formulated from research by Terry Martin and Kenneth Doka; some of their results are published as part of their book, "Men Don't Cry, Women Do: Transcending Gender Stereotypes of Grief."

From: <http://www.squidoo.com/grief-loss-bereavement#module10213343>

## Intuitive Griever



## Instrumental Griever





# How Long Does Grief Last?

- Initial grief lasts anywhere from three months to one year after the loss has occurred
- Many people experience profound grief for many months after that
- The grief process is often similar to a rollercoaster. Full of highs and lows.
- There is no time limit on grief, though usually the cycle becomes easier a year after the loss





- Never minimize a loss.
- Discourage the griever from making immediate major decisions.
- Grieving and the adaptation to loss takes a lot of time. Do not expect quick, clean, “everything is back to normal” experiences.
- Supporting means listening, not telling. Help the person talk about his/her grief. Listen and ask questions.
- Allow them to experience their pain and let them share it.
- Grief is a spiral, not linear
- Don’t react to anger, hostility and distancing with similar responses. Let the person be -he/she is coping.
- Your attitude says more than words. Non-verbal communication—a touch of the hand or just being present – is often most effective.
- Encourage them to talk about the deceased.

# Supporting Grieving Caregivers

- Recognize that roles have shifted
- Anticipate that there will be feelings of guilt/regret
- Encourage them to find new routines
- Acknowledge that they cared for someone else for a long time – it's ok to take care of themselves now!



# Remember!



- Eat well
- Get plenty of rest
- Take walks or engage in moderate exercise
- Keep a grief journal
- Read books on grief
- Cry
- Talk
- Allow yourself to experience the many feelings that you may have such as anger, sadness, or guilt
- Try relaxation exercises, yoga and meditation
- Express your feelings in whatever way is comfortable for you — prayer, music, art, etc.
- Remember that grief takes time. Be easy on yourself.

## Websites

[www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

[www.good-grief.org](http://www.good-grief.org)

[www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

## **We Are Here For You!**

**If you would like more information on CareFirst Grief Services,  
please contact our Grief Services Department at:  
607.962.3100**

**Or visit our website: [WWW.CAREFIRSTNY.ORG](http://WWW.CAREFIRSTNY.ORG)**

**Carly Nichols, LMSW, APHSW-C  
Support Services Manager  
[nicholsc@carefirstny.org](mailto:nicholsc@carefirstny.org)**