

## Grief & Loss

Grief and loss come into everyone's life and at different times. We cannot control how it comes, but we can control how we chose to deal with it and how to heal from it.

A feeling of grief can be caused by a number of reasons, such as death, divorce, a move, loss of friends, job or dreams; giving up an addiction, lifestyle or long held attitude; broken trust or major disappointment. Any issue can cause grief, depending on how the individual feels toward the loss.

To help someone begin the healing process, it is important to know that everyone grieves differently. The path in coming to terms with the reality of a loss, accepting the loss, adjusting the environment to the loss and moving forward with the loss, must be designed to the individual. Here are a few points to consider in grieving:

### 1. There Is No Right Or Wrong Way

- Doesn't have to be orderly with predictable stages
- Avoid telling bereaved how they should feel or what they should do

### 2. They May Experience Extreme Emotions And Behaviors

- Provide reassurance that what they are feeling is normal
- Don't judge or take grief reactions personally

### 3. Disregard A Timetable

- Don't pressure the bereaved to move on or get over it. This can actually slow their healing

The following outlines different **stages of grief** with an often associated response. Remember, each person's reactions will be individual, unique and vary in duration and intensity.

- Shock** Denial, acting out, and withdrawing
- Depression** Fear of experiencing pain of the reality, aloneness, hopelessness, can't go on
- Guilt** Takes blame, thoughts of "what if I had only..."
- Anger** Rage, self-pity, acting out, drinking, cutting, destroying objects
- Acceptance** Acceptance of loss and reality, sense of closure, willingness to rebuild and move on

At times, someone may get "stuck" in a particular stage of grief. When this happens, they are unable to move forward to acceptance.

Also, extreme grief may cause a chemical change in a person's body that can lead to depression. You may need to consult a doctor or mental health professional to assist you.

### Signs Of Depression

- Inability to handle routine life tasks
- Decreased interest/participation in activities previously enjoyed
- Feelings of intense hopelessness or apathy
- Physical changes i.e. weight gain/loss, inattention to personal hygiene or appearance, sleep changes, severe headaches
- Suicidal feelings

### In This Edition:

- Breaking Through Addictions
- Loss of Control
- Craving
- 3 Second Rule
- Persistent Use
- Where to Begin

With new challenges and addictions arising every day, seek first to understand and listen before counseling or correcting.

### Who is West Ridge Academy?

- Gospel Centered
- Spiritual Based
- Youth Residential Treatment
- Helped over 25,000 youth and their families
- Established in 1964



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Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss, but many of things we have learned about dealing with grief are not helpful. Here are six most common and unhelpful myths about dealing with loss.

## Myths

### 1. Don't Feel Bad, Sad Or Scared

These are common emotions essential to being human. They must have equality of expression.

### 2. Replace The Loss

Loss isn't a thing or object. The irreplaceable element is the lost relationship which cannot be replaced.

### 3. Grieve Alone

This creates isolation. Communicating the truth about how you feel is very healthy whether it be good news or bad. Become a better listener and don't judge or criticize the feelings of the bereaved

### 4. Grief Just Takes Time

Although completion and recovery from a loss happens within time, they are not a function of time.

### 5. Be Strong For Others

This can lead to a loss of displaying emotions and consequently cause the bereaved to clam up. Don't try to "be" anything for someone else. All you can be is honest.

### 6. Keep Busy

The grief and pain associated with the loss have to be dealt with. Distracting yourself in

a whirlwind of activity, thus causing another day to pass, may only lead to physical and emotional exhaustion.

As special dates, holidays and anniversaries approach, a grieving person may find it difficult to cope and may experience renewed heartache. This is normal. The second year after the loss or death is typically the hardest. This is due to the fact that many of those supporting the bereaved remember the holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries that first year, but in the second year they tend to forget and have moved on, while those grieving a deep loss have not. Mourners tend to feel forgotten and alone during this second year of experiencing a loss.

Helping children through the grieving process requires additional awareness. They too must work through the tasks of grief, but they must do so with greater limits on their level of understanding, less developed coping skills and with less control over their external world. Encourage them to ask questions and honor how they feel and help them recognize what it is they are grieving. It is especially important to keep the lines of communication open. Encourage them to keep memories alive with pictures, journaling, scrapbooking or creating a legacy activity in celebration of the deceased.

## Helping A Grieving Person

- Listen with compassion
- Encourage bereaved to share feelings
- Offer practical assistance - don't wait to be asked

- Watch for warning signs
- Provide ongoing support—a team of family, friends, peers, neighbors, coworkers, community and religious leaders, etc.

Lastly, don't set expectations about what their journey through grief should look like. Mourners just need to own and honor their feelings and walk the journey in front of them.

When counseling someone who is grieving, your goal is not to make them feel better. It is simply to help them acknowledge the grief and feelings they have and are experiencing so they can move on. Let them feel. It's ok to be sad. Remember, you can't "fix" them or make them be happy. They will be sad and you will feel sad for them.

This is normal and part of the grief process.