



## Thursday Night Life Small Group Study

# Grief and Loss

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**Opening Question:** What is grief? What is loss? Does grief and loss go together or can they happen apart from one another? How do you handle the grief and loss in your life? In the Community?

**Grief is:** Grief is the natural reaction to loss. Grief is both a universal and a personal experience.<sup>1</sup>

- a. Mourning the loss of a person, place, or thing.
- b. Deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement.<sup>2</sup>
- c. Trouble or annoyance.<sup>3</sup>
- d. A part of life.

Grief can affect **EVERYONE!** No one is immune to grief and loss. From children to adults, anyone who experiences a loss can experience grief.

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<sup>1</sup> What is Grief? <https://www.mayoclinic.org/patient-visitor-guide/support-groups/what-is-grief>.

<sup>2</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary

<sup>3</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary

## **Types of Grief:<sup>4</sup>**

### **Anticipatory grief**

For family caregivers, grieving can start long before the person you are caring for actually passes way. Anticipatory grief often starts when the person you are caring for gets a significant diagnosis and their health begins to deteriorate. Feelings are related to the loss of what was or what you thought life was going to be like. It can be difficult to speak with others about anticipatory grief because the person you care for is still alive and you may have feelings of guilt or confusion as to why you are feeling this kind of grief.

### **Normal grief**

Contrary to what the name might suggest, there really are no set guidelines to define normal grief in terms of timelines or severity of grief. Instead, think of normal grief as any response that resembles what you might predict grief to look like (if that makes any sense!). Many people define normal grief as the ability to move towards acceptance of the loss. With this comes a gradual decrease in the intensity of emotions. Those who experience normal grief are able to continue to function in their basic daily activities.

### **Delayed grief**

Delayed grief is when reactions and emotions in response to a death are postponed until a later time. This type of grief may be initiated by another major life event or even something that seems unrelated. Reactions can be excessive to the current situation and the person may not initially realize that delayed grief is the real reason for becoming so emotional.

### **Complicated grief (traumatic or prolonged)**

Complicated grief refers to normal grief that becomes severe in longevity and significantly impairs the ability to function. It can be difficult to judge when grief has lasted too long. Other contributing factors in diagnosing complicated or prolonged grief include looking at the nature of the loss or death (was it sudden? violent? multiple?), the relationship, personality, life experiences, and other social issues. Some warning signs that someone is experiencing traumatic grief include: self-destructive behavior, deep and

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<sup>4</sup> Types of grief. <https://elizz.com/caregiver-resources/types-of-grief-and-loss/>

persistent feelings of guilt, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, violent outbursts, or radical lifestyle changes.

### **Disenfranchised grief (ambiguous)**

Disenfranchised grief can be felt when someone experiences a loss but others do not acknowledge the importance of the loss in the person's life. Others may not understand the importance of the loss or they may minimize the significance of the loss.

Disenfranchised grief can occur when someone experiences the loss of an ex-spouse, a pet, or a co-worker. The other side of disenfranchised grief is when you experience a loss such as when the person you are caring for has dementia or a decline in their physical abilities. The person is physically present but they are also absent in other significant ways.

### **Chronic grief**

This type of grief can be experienced in many ways: through feelings of hopelessness, a sense of disbelief that the loss is real, avoidance of any situation that may remind someone of the loss, or loss of meaning and value in a belief system. At times, people with chronic grief can experience intrusive thoughts. If left untreated, chronic grief can develop into severe clinical depression, suicidal or self-harming thoughts, and even substance abuse.

### **Cumulative grief**

This type of grief can occur when multiple losses are experienced, often within a short period of time. Cumulative grief can be stressful because you don't have time to properly grieve one loss before experiencing the next.

### **Masked grief**

Masked grief can be in the form of physical symptoms or other negative behaviors that are out of character. Someone experiencing masked grief is unable to recognize that these symptoms or behaviors are connected to a loss.

**Distorted grief**

Unfortunately, distorted grief can present with extreme feelings of guilt or anger, noticeable changes in behavior, hostility towards a particular person, plus other self-destructive behaviors.

**Exaggerated grief**

Exaggerated grief is felt through the intensification of normal grief responses. This intensification has a tendency to worsen as time moves on. This may result in self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts, drug abuse, abnormal fears, nightmares, and even the emergence of underlying psychiatric disorders.

**Inhibited grief**

This type of grief is when someone doesn't outwardly show any typical signs of grief. Often this is done consciously to keep grief private. Problems can arise with inhibited grief through physical manifestations when an individual doesn't allow themselves to grieve.

**Secondary losses in grief**

Secondary loss is felt after the primary loss and can affect multiple areas of an individual's life. The grief from secondary loss is the emotional response to the subsequent losses that occur as a result of a death (the primary loss).

**Collective grief**

Collective grief is felt by a group. For example, this could be experienced by a community, city, or country as a result of a natural disaster, death of a public figure, or a terrorist attack.

**Abbreviated grief**

Abbreviated grief is a short-lived response to a loss. This could occur due to someone or something immediately filling the void, the distance that was felt, or the experience of anticipatory grief.

## Absent grief

Absent grief is when someone does not acknowledge the loss and shows no signs of grief. This can be the result of complete shock or denial of the death. It can be concerning if someone experiences absent grief for an extended period of time.

### **4 Types of Grief We Don't Talk About Much:**<sup>5</sup>

1. Loss of Identity: A lost role or affiliation
2. Loss of Safety: The lost sense of physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
3. Loss of Autonomy: The lost ability to manager one's own life and affairs.
4. Loss of Dreams or Expectations: Dealing with hopes and dreams going unfulfilled.

According to Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Ms. Sarah Epstein she writes, "Loss of identity, safety, autonomy, and expectations are all losses the warrant a sense of grief. Grief and mourning as a framework can help each of us work through a moment or chapter of chaos with the gentleness we give a mourner. The mourner receives compassion and is entitled to anger, sadness, numbness, disorientation, and nonlinear healing. The word grief both accurately characterizes the internal reality of the process and legitimizes and concretizes the process to ourselves and others.

While many experience the setbacks and tragedies of life with grief and mourning, many feel they are not entitled to the word.

So I give you permission.

You may grieve.

You may mourn.

Your loss is real.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Epstein, Sarah., "4 types of grief nobody told you about: And why it's important that we call them grief." <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-the-generations/201904/4-types-grief-nobody-told-you-about>

<sup>6</sup> Epstein, Sarah., "4 types of grief nobody told you about: And why it's important that we call them grief." <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-the-generations/201904/4-types-grief-nobody-told-you-about>

**Grief can cause:**

1. Anger
2. Frustration.
3. Denial
4. Sadness.
5. Temporary and/or long-term depression.
6. Suicidal ideations and actions

*“It’s important to note that in some instances, just because you can’t see the signs of grief, it doesn’t necessarily mean that someone is not grieving.”<sup>7</sup>*

**Did people grieve in the Bible?- ABSOLUTELY!**

Grief and Loss can be seen from the beginning of time when Adam and Eve lost their place in the Garden of Eden. The Bible is replete with women and men who grieved. But like Christians today, we don’t grieve like those without hope. We have hope through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Biblical Examples of Grief and Loss <sup>8</sup>****Abraham’s wife Sarah dies Genesis 23:2**

“And Sarah died at Kiriath-arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham went in to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://elizz.com/caregiver-resources/types-of-grief-and-loss/>

<sup>8</sup> Examples of Trials In the Bible: 7 Biblical Stories. <https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/examples-of-trials-in-the-bible-7-biblical-stories/>

**Joseph- He was sold into slavery by his brothers but restored their relationship (Genesis 50:20)**

“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

**Job lost everything he had (Job 2:13)**

“And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great.”

**The Book of Ruth**

Ruth and Naomi lost their husbands and sons. They mourned their losses together and apart.

**King David suffered a number of losses (Psalm 27:13-14)**

“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

**(2 Samuel 12:14-16)**

David fasted to seek God’s healing for his sick child. It was during this intense seven-day fast that David wrote Psalm 51, one of the most heartfelt expressions of repentance in the entire Bible. The overall purpose of David’s fast was not to get God to do what he wanted, but rather to be humbled and reconciled with God as he beseeched Him in prayer. Even though God chose not to save the child’s life, the fast still served its purpose of bringing David closer to God after being separated by sin.

**Prophet Jeremiah grieved for the people and the loss he witnessed (Jeremiah 9:1-2)**

“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people! Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them! for they be all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men.”

## **Jesus grieved the death of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35)**

“Jesus wept.”

## **Revelation 21:4**

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

## **5 Stages of Grief: (According to Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross)<sup>9</sup>**

1. Denial
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance

## **7 Stages of Grief: (Another popular model used for complicated experiences of loss)<sup>10</sup>**

1. Shock and denial: This is a state of disbelief and numbed feelings.
2. Pain and guilt: You may feel that the loss is unbearable and that you're making other people's lives harder because of your feelings and needs.
3. Anger and bargaining: You may lash out, telling God or a higher power that you'll do anything they ask if they'll only grant you relief from these feelings.
4. Depression: This may be a period of isolation and loneliness during which you process and reflect on the loss.
5. The upward turn: At this point, the stages of grief like anger and pain have died down, and you're left in a more calm and relaxed state.
6. Reconstruction and working through: You can begin to put pieces of your life back together and carry forward.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief#anger>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief#7-stages>

7. Acceptance and hope: This is a very gradual acceptance of the new way of life and a feeling of possibility in the future.

### **How to Cope with Grief and Loss:**<sup>11</sup>

- + Talk to family or friends
- + Seek counseling
- + Read poetry or books
- + Engage in social activities
- + Exercise
- + Eat healthy, good foods
- + Seek spiritual support
- + Take time to relax
- + Join a support group
- + Listen to music
- + Be patient with yourself
- + Let yourself feel grief

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<sup>11</sup> Grief and Loss. The University of Texas Counseling and Mental Health Center.  
<https://cmhc.utexas.edu/griefloss.html>

## **Resources for Grief and Loss**

Mayo Clinic. What is grief? <https://www.mayoclinic.org/patient-visitor-guide/support-groups/what-is-grief>

Elizz by SE Health <https://elizz.com/caregiver-resources/types-of-grief-and-loss/>

Holland, Kimberly., and Legg, Timothy. *What you should know about the stages of grief.* <https://www.healthline.com/health/stages-of-grief>

Epstein, Sarah., “Four Types of Grief Nobody Told You About.” <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/between-the-generations/201904/4-types-grief-nobody-told-you-about>

Navigating Grief: A Guidebook for Grief Awareness and Understanding., <https://www.learnpsychology.org/now/grief/>

Speaking Grief-Resources: Types of Grief. <https://speakinggrief.org/get-better-at-grief/understanding-grief/types-of-grief>