

## Dealing with Grief

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### A Time for Everything



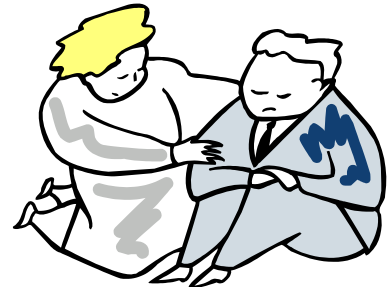
*There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot,  
a time to kill and a time to heal,  
a time to tear down and a time to build,  
a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
a time to mourn and a time to dance.  
~ Ecclesiastes 3*

Everyone has a time in their life when they mourn. Grief is a universal experience. All people grieve sometime during their life, for everyone has losses of some kind which are the primary cause of grief. There are the obvious losses:

- death of a loved one
- the break-up of a relationship
- separation
- divorce

And the not so obvious losses:

- loss of a job
- loss of money
- moving
- illness (loss of health) of self or a loved one
- changing teachers, changing schools
- robbery
- success (the loss of striving)
- loss of a cherished ideal
- loss of a long-term goal
- the recent loss of financial security in our country



In this article we will be talking about grieving. Unfortunately people can sometimes be uncomfortable with grief. This is unfortunate because it is an unavoidable process, which must be experienced before recovery can occur. Grief is not weakness, not lack of faith, but a psychological necessity. We will be talking about grief coping strategies for yourself, your loved ones, children, friends and co-workers.

We have talked about the overall issue of grief. Let's talk specifically how to cope when you are going through a loss. As mentioned, everyone experiences grief at sometime in his or her life. However, everyone experiences grief differently and to varying degrees. Your personality, coping style and view of the world play a major role. Also, the support systems you have or do not have will influence how you grieve. In addition, I believe that the type of loss that you have plays a part in how you grieve. In the case of a loss of a spouse or divorce from a spouse there are sanctioned grieving responses from the rest of society. When it is more a hidden loss, i.e. miscarriage, loss of a partner in a gay relationship that people

did not know about or another type of hidden loss, you may not find the usual helpful responses. This may (though not necessarily) make it more complicated bereavement.

Responses to grief are emotional and physical. Some people have a coping style that allows them to continue functioning, while others need to slow down and withdraw.

There is no one right way to deal with grief. Though people respond differently there are some common responses to grief which include:

- Disbelief
- Anger
- Guilt
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Relief
- Dreams
- Physical Symptoms

Almost everyone needs help dealing with grief. Here are some suggestions:

- Give yourself permission to grieve - it is not a weakness!
- Find comfort in friends and family
- Keep busy, but also allow yourself to rest when needed
- Seek individual help through a professional if needed
- Join a support group



We have talked about how you can cope when going through a loss. Now, we will talk about how you can help someone else going through a loss, specifically a co-worker. You've already learned some of the common reactions to a loss and the suggested coping strategies. Knowing about the grief process will help you support your co-worker.

Often we spend as much time, or sometimes more, with our co-workers than our family and friends. Consequently when they are grieving, we are often one of their main supports. This is complicated by the fact that you and your co-worker have a job to do to do. The grieving co-worker may not be as productive or need to be out of the work environment. This may cause stress for you or your other co-workers. Remember to care for yourself as you are helping your co-worker.

How do you help your co-worker? Everyone responds differently so there is no one right way to help. However, the following are possible ways you might be of help during this stressful time:

- Listen - this is the greatest gift you can give someone who is grieving.
- Accept all feelings
- Avoid "clichés" and easy answers, i.e. "I know how you feel" or "God won't give you more than you can handle" The best response may be "I'm sorry" or "I don't know what to say"
- Help the person find support and encouragement
- Make specific offers of help, i.e. "I can do that report for you"
- Suggest professional help if appropriate, your EAP is a wonderful resource.
- Respect individual needs
- Be patient
- Talk to your supervisor or other appropriate person if the work situation is becoming difficult.
- Remember that often the person needs assistance after months pass by. The initial numbness that "protected" the bereaved person wears off and the real grief work begins.
- Don't forget to get support for yourself as you help your co-worker.

For our last section of talking about grief, we will focus on how to help children with grieving.

As nurturing adults, we often want to soften our explanation of what death means. We may feel more comfortable using euphemisms such as “we lost grandma,” or “your mommy was such a good mommy that God asked her to be the special mommy for babies in heaven.” The problem with this is a preschool child might reply, “Let’s go find grandma,” and why would a child be happy knowing his most cherished person in the world was taken from him to care for other kids in heaven?

Children need us to be direct and tell them that Grandpa Henry died. We need to convey what happens physically to the person who has died, by saying that a dead person’s body totally stops working. A dead person can’t breathe, eat, talk, walk, go to the bathroom or do anything. Once we explain the physical causes, we can add our family beliefs about the spirit or afterlife in an age appropriate manner.



Following are the important basic ideas to have in mind for helping a child with grief:

- Children grieve - sometimes we are understandably so caught up in our own grief, the grief of the child is unnoticed or unappreciated.
- Children grieve for a long time.
- Children should be told about the death immediately.
- A child’s loss is different. As a parent you lost a partner, companion, friend and lover. The child lost a nurturer, protector, teacher and role model. However, if that person was not good to the child, it may complicate the bereavement.
- A child cannot carry the parent’s grief.

As with adults, there is a grieving process, which we discussed previously. Obviously the age of the child will affect how they understand death, and what “normal” reactions are and what things you would do to help. However, good communication helps all ages. Regardless of age, be honest and share true feelings. Pain is unavoidable and like adults, the child must endure the pain of grief in order to “work through” this difficult time.

Take care of yourself during this process so you can be there for the child(ren).

Contact a support group. For example, The Cove is an organization set up for grieving children and their families. They can be reached at 203- 634-0500 or [www.covect.org](http://www.covect.org)

Remember, children are resilient. With understanding and support, they will come through their grief in a health and maturing way.

If you would like to talk about this or any other issues, please call Solutions Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for free, confidential assessment, short-term counseling and referral when needed.

**Call Solutions EAP at 1-800-526-3485 for assistance for all of life’s challenges.  
It’s free, confidential and open to family members.  
Check us out on-line [www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)**