University Counseling Center

Coping with Grief and Loss
Understanding the Grieving Process
What is Grief?

Grief is the process of experiencing the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual effects of a death or other loss.

Any loss can cause grief, including:
- A relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a friendship
Understanding the Grieving Process

- After a significant loss, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as:
  - Shock
  - Anger
  - Fear
  - Emptiness
  - Sadness
  - Anxiety
  - Confusion

- There is not a right or wrong way to grieve--but there are healthy ways to cope with the pain.
The Five Stages of Grief

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross introduced what became known as the “Five Stages of Grief.”

- **Denial**: “This can’t be happening to me.”
- **Anger**: “Why is this happening? Who is to blame?”
- **Bargaining**: “If you make this not happen, I promise I will_____.”
- **Depression**: “I’m too sad to do anything.”
- **Acceptance**: “I’m at peace with what happened.”
Everyone Grieves Differently

- People have to pass through their own individual journey of coming to terms with loss.

- How you grieve depends on many factors, including:
  - Your personality and coping style
  - Your life experience
  - Your faith
  - The nature of the loss
Unhealthy Ways of Coping With Grief and Loss

- Continuing to deny the loss
- Intellectualizing about it
- Stuffing our feelings
- Macho mentality (I’m strong; I can handle it by myself)
- Using alcohol or other drugs to suppress the pain
- Prolonged attempt to get the lost object back
Healthy Ways of Coping With Grief and Loss

- Turn to friends and family members
- Draw comfort from your faith
- Face your feelings
- Get support from a counselor
- Take care of yourself
- Keep a journal or diary of your thoughts and feelings or consider writing your loved one a letter
GETTING BETTER MEANS...

- Solving problems and completing tasks in your daily work routine again
- Sleeping well and having energy again
- Feeling good enough about yourself to be hopeful about the rest of your life
- Increased focus on life and a decreased focus on death or loss
- Being able to enjoy the pleasurable and beautiful things in life again

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REFERENCES:


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