



ACG Counseling Services LLC

GRIEF WORK

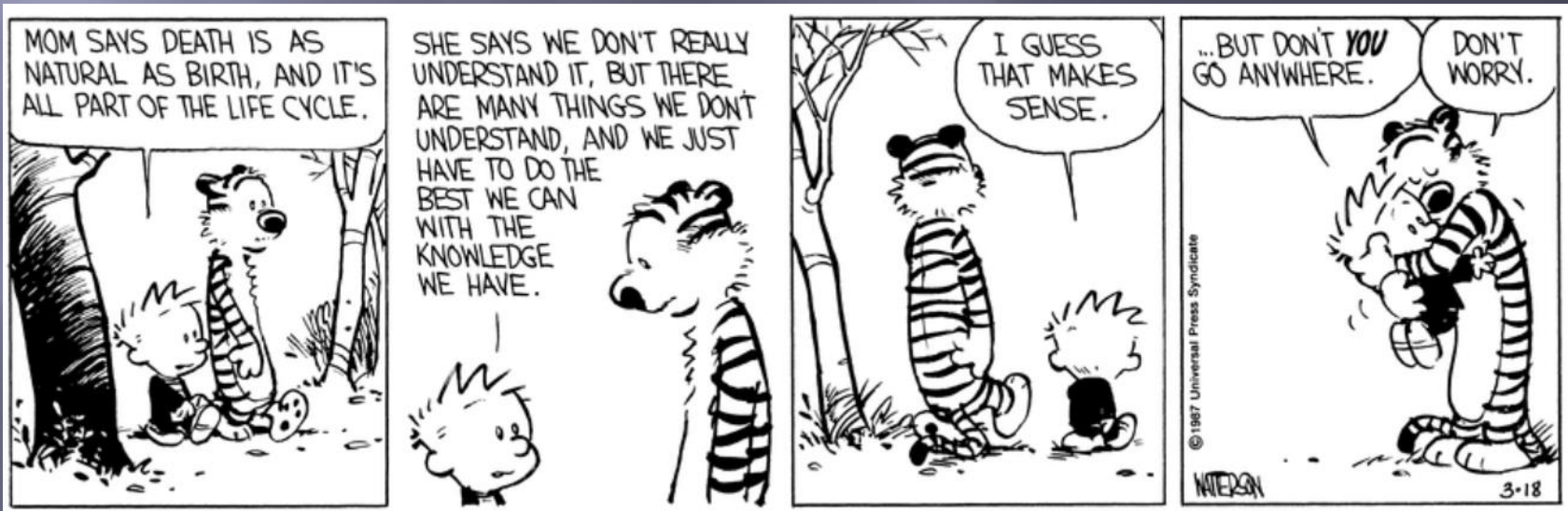


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Objectives

- ▣ Grief Psychoeducation
 - Understanding grief a little better
- ▣ Tools to use
 - “What to do” with Grief
- ▣ Resources
 - To further your knowledge

If you are alive, you will experience loss and grief.



Definitions



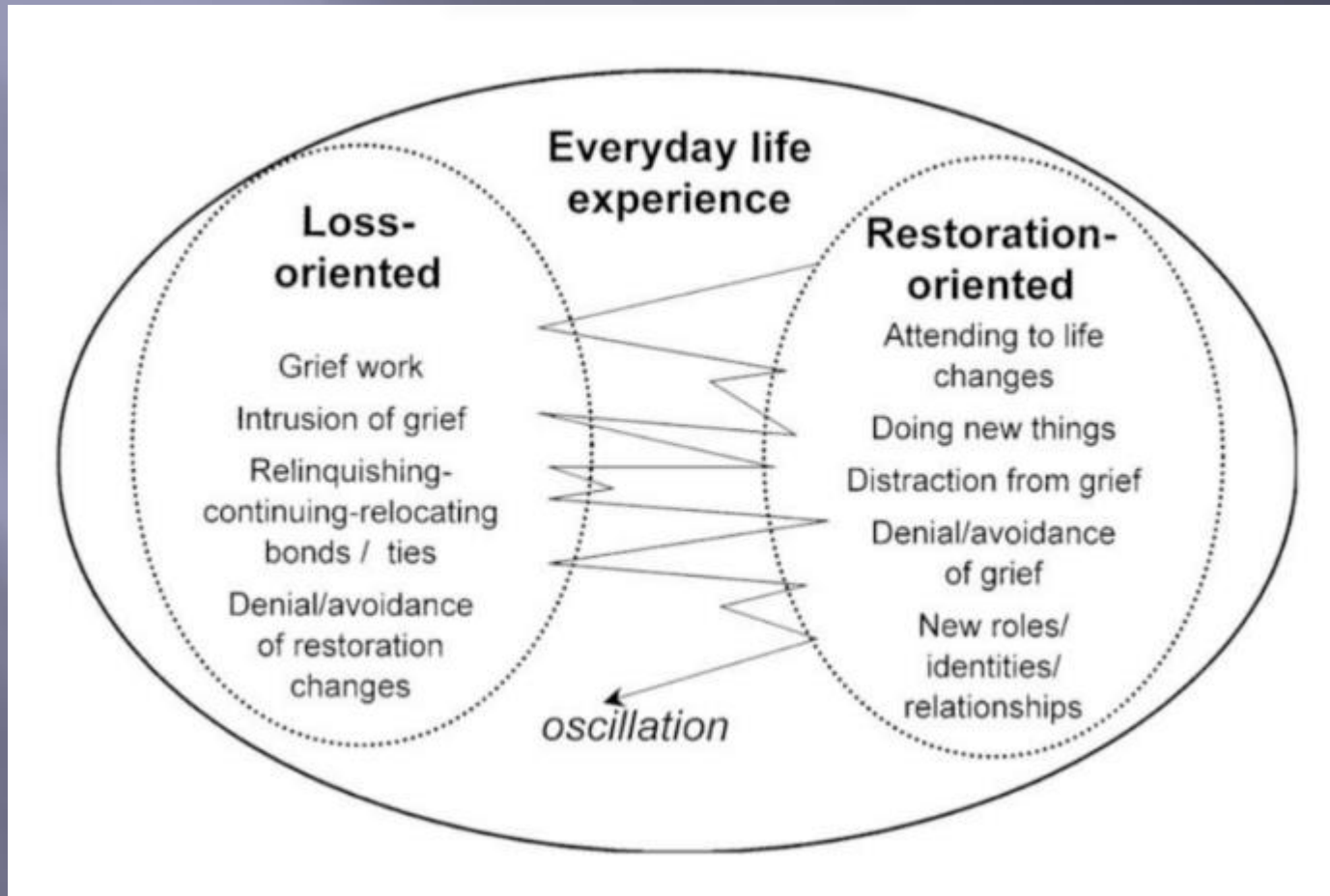
- ❑ **Loss** – the fact of no longer having something
- ❑ **Death** – the action or fact of dying or being killed; the end of the life of a person or organism
- ❑ **Bereavement** - - the state of being deprived by force, robbed, torn apart or stripped of something one values; the state of sorrow over the death or departure of a loved one, the process of grieving and mourning.
- ❑ **Grief**- normal involuntary reaction to a loss; can manifest physically, psychologically, intellectually, socially and spiritually. We grieve all losses, grief is accumulative.
- ❑ **Mourning**- outward expression of grief; external, public or voluntary expression of grief; the process by which a bereaved person integrates a loss into his or her life.

Theories of Mourning/Grief



- ❑ **Stage-Based** - Elizabeth Kubler-Ross – 5 stages, very linear and defined. Denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance
- ❑ **Phase-Based** – John Bowlby’s attachment theory, Bowlby/Parks model, proposes four phases: shock and numbness, yearning and searching, disorganization and despair, and reorganization
- ❑ **Task-Based** – William Worden, a series of tasks to be completed: accept the reality, work through the pain, adjust to the environment, emotionally relocate and memorialize.
- ❑ **Process-Based**– Stoebe and Schut, loss-oriented and restoration-oriented processes. Grieving individual at times confronts, other times avoids, the different tasks of grieving. The need for “dosing” grief/mourning – take respite from dealing with either of these stressors as an integral part of adaptive coping.

Dual-Processing Diagram



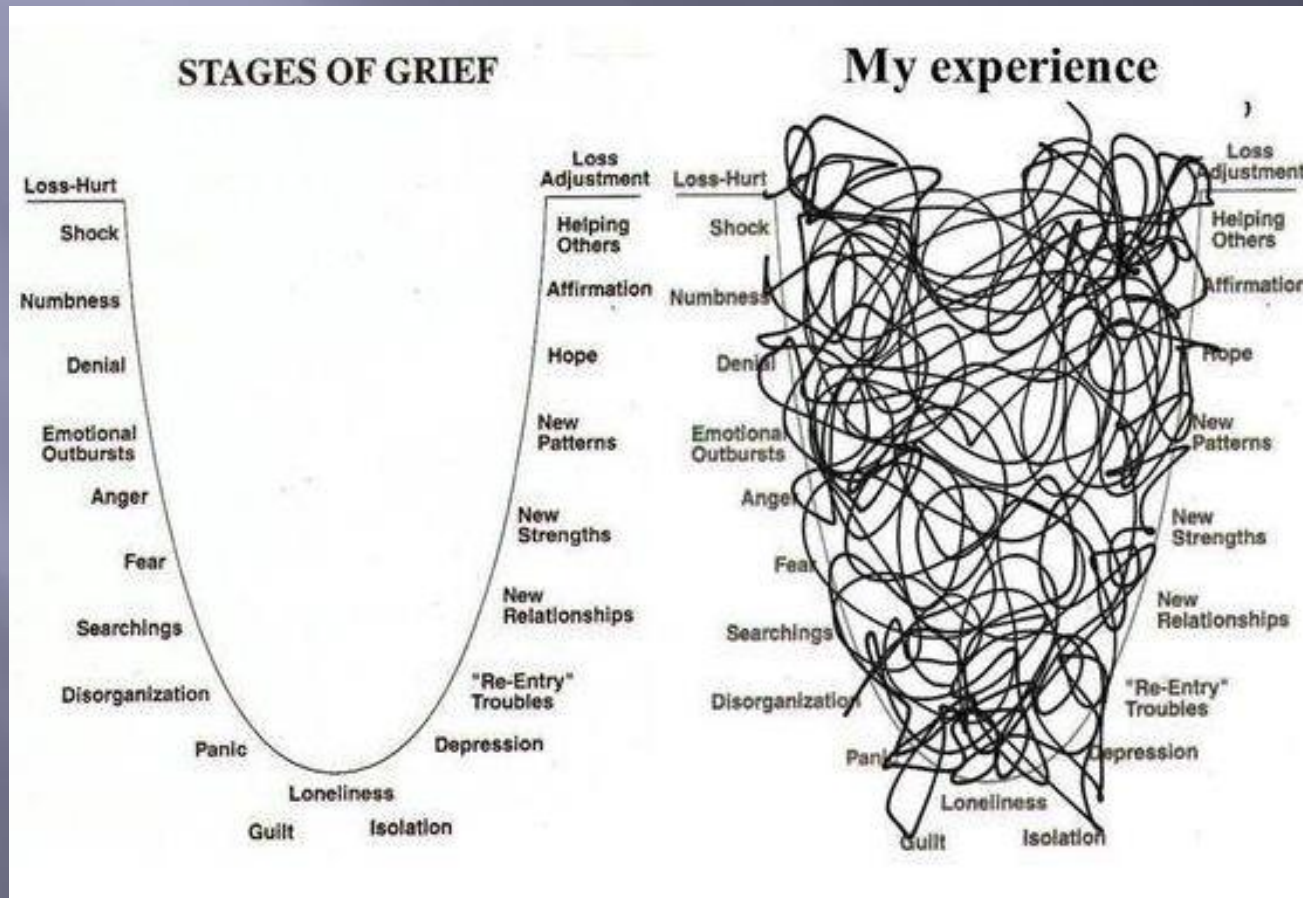
Instrumental vs. Intuitive

- ▣ **Instrumental** - practical matters and problem solving focus. Instrumental grievers tend to “do” things.
- ▣ **Intuitive** - tends to focus on experiencing and expressing emotion. Intuitive grievers tend to “feel” things.
- ▣ Many people will grieve using a combination of intuitive and instrumental styles.

Types of Grief

- ▣ **Anticipatory Grief** – grief that occurs prior to the potential death or loss
- ▣ **Expected Grief** – a loss that is expected, where people have an opportunity to prepare for it and make efforts to have closure.
- ▣ **Unexpected or Acute Grief** – a loss that is unexpected, perhaps sudden, there can be trauma, shock, and/or horror. Without having had time to prepare for it, denial must protect people longer.
- ▣ **Ambiguous Grief** – grief of someone who is still alive (dementia, missing person...)
- ▣ **Shadow or Anniversary Grief** – grief reactions prompted by holiday, anniversary of death, or other dates/times/days. Often catches the griever unaware.
- ▣ **Secondary Losses** – grief over losses/changes resulting from the primary death/loss, such as financial loss, moves, loss of identity, loss of freedom/increase in responsibilities
- ▣ **Complicated Grief** – Grief which doesn't follow the "normal" or expected pattern due to complicating factors which may include lack of support, isolation, trauma, multiple losses, loss of long-term relationship, loss of an infant/child, etc. The griever may not heal in a healthy manner without outside assistance or intervention.
 - ▣ Worden identifies four types of complicated grief: chronic grief reaction (prolonged duration and does not lead to an appropriate outcome), delayed grief (when "normal" grief reactions are suppressed or postponed and do not surface until a later loss or triggering event), exaggerated grief (excessive and disabling in ways that may lead to physical or psychological impairment), masked grief (complete absence of grief or when grief interferes with functioning that the individual doesn't recognize)
 - **Traumatic Loss** – loss that is interpreted and experienced by the individual as traumatic.
 - **Disoriented Grief** – Grief experiences specific to displacement, destruction and fear following a disaster.
- ▣ **Disenfranchised Grief** – a form of complicated grief occurring when the loss is not or cannot be recognized, validated, openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported. (Examples can include: death of an ex-spouse, miscarriage, abortion, pet loss, missing or abducted persons, loss of a body part, death by suicide...)
 - **Suffocated Grief** – grief that is not only stigmatized but is punished
- ▣ **Absent Grief** – no external mourning, behaviors are incongruent with loss experienced.

What Grief typically “looks” like...



The Nature of Grief

- ▣ There are no shortcuts; no one can take away your pain.
- ▣ While experiencing the pain of grief, people usually revert back to their most familiar coping mechanisms.
- ▣ There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and there is no timeline. Grief lasts longer and is more painful than most people expect.
- ▣ One of the least helpful things for grieving people is other people telling them how they “should” be doing things. The most helpful things for grieving people is to be able to process their feelings.
 - Note your own experiences in the room when grief is present
- ▣ People are fundamentally resilient, they can and will survive, even if at times in grief they feel like they cannot.

Basic Principles of Grief

- ▣ When we talk about grief, we are talking about the attachments we form and a disruption to those attachments.
- ▣ Grief is a process that occurs over time as we relearn ourselves and our world, creating a new normal. It involves reworking the assumptions we previously made about the world.
- ▣ Concepts such as “resolving”, “recovery”, “moving on” or “letting go” are inaccurate and misleading in grief work.

What to expect from people who are grieving:

- ▣ High levels of emotional pain, despair
- ▣ Ambivalence about moving away from the pain and hopelessness
- ▣ A strong wish to hold onto the old form, resistance to doing otherwise
- ▣ Difficulty in finding ways to feel hopeful, or believing that they will ever feel hopeful or happy again
- ▣ Strong need to tell their story, often times needing to tell it repeatedly
- ▣ Grief can exacerbate existing physical and mental health issues, sometimes it can even mask physical or mental health issues that individuals may not be aware they have.
- ▣ “Grief Brain”

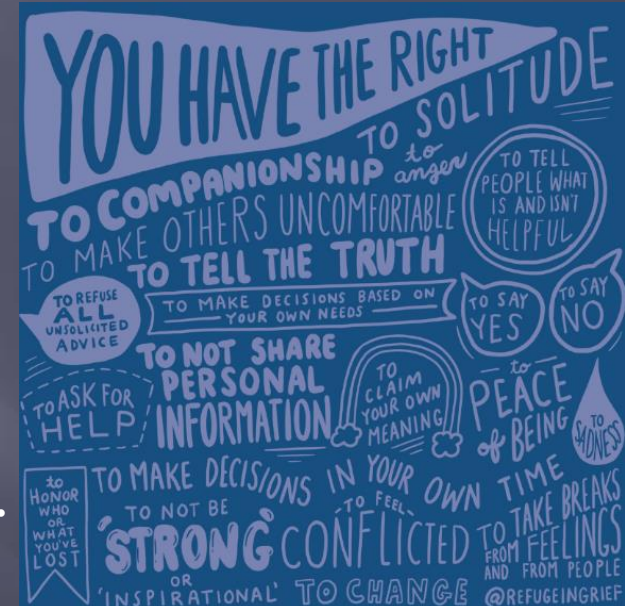
Experiences within Grief...

- ▣ Disbelief
- ▣ Shock
- ▣ Physical Symptoms
- ▣ Denial
- ▣ Asking “why”
- ▣ Repeating
- ▣ Rigid Self-Control
- ▣ Reality
- ▣ Confusion
- ▣ Idealizing
- ▣ Identifying
- ▣ Anxiety
- ▣ Bargaining
- ▣ Depression
- ▣ Relief
- ▣ Guilt
- ▣ Preoccupation
- ▣ Anger
- ▣ Loneliness
- ▣ Despair
- ▣ Sadness
- ▣ Helpless
- ▣ Envy
- ▣ Frustration
- ▣ Bitterness
- ▣ Waiting to feel “normal”
- ▣ Hanging on
- ▣ Hope
- ▣ Missing
- ▣ Commitment
- ▣ Peace and moving forward

Bereaved Person's "Bill of Rights"

By Dr. Alan Wolfelt

- ❑ 1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief.
- ❑ 2. You have the right to talk about your grief.
- ❑ 3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.
- ❑ 4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.
- ❑ 5. You have the right to experience "grief bursts."
- ❑ 6. You have the right to make use of ritual.
- ❑ 7. You have the right to embrace your spirituality.
- ❑ 8. You have the right to search for meaning.
- ❑ 9. You have the right to treasure your memories.
- ❑ 10. You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.



.... What if I haven't
experienced a death?
Can I still grieve?

- ▣ Grief is not just due to death/dying – grief comes up when there is **LOSS**
- ▣ All of our clients have experienced a sense of loss even if it's not death related – loss of self, identity, role, relationship, child/children, romantic partner, sense of security, sense of safety, future expectations/dreams, self-esteem, emotional support, financial security, other important tangible and intangible things
- ▣ They may have experienced or be experiencing other losses contributing to their grief experiences. Remember: Grief is accumulative.

How Can I Help Someone Experiencing Emotional Pain

- ▣ Being present and listening builds trust when someone is experiencing emotional pain.
- ▣ Allow them to be free to experience their own journey in their own time.
- ▣ Provide support and encouragement, but don't expect anything. If they are not where you think they "should" be that is **okay**.
- ▣ Give hope, but not false hope. There is a difference between hope and denial. Hope is based in reality, denial is a refusal to acknowledge or recognize the reality or existence of something.
- ▣ Provide them with unconditional, positive regard.

Well intended but often unhelpful things to say...

- “Everything happens for a reason”
- “He wouldn’t want you to cry”
- “Just stay busy so it won’t bother you”
- “She’s in a better place”
- “He had a long life”
- “I know how you feel” or “I totally know what you’re going through”
- “You need to move on” or “Get over it” or “It’s been a long time, why is it still bothering you?”
- “Imagine how much worse you could have it, you should be grateful”
- “Sometimes you have to pick yourself up by your bootstraps”
- “You shouldn’t be so angry”
- “Just remember the happy times”
- “Have you tried... that worked for my aunt so-and-so when she went through [insert unrelated grief].”



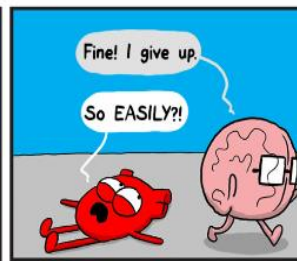
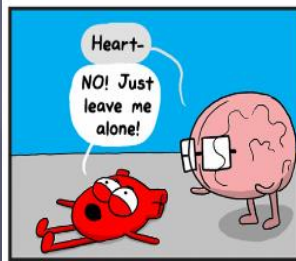
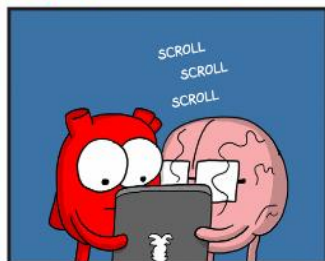
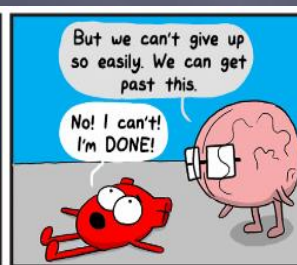
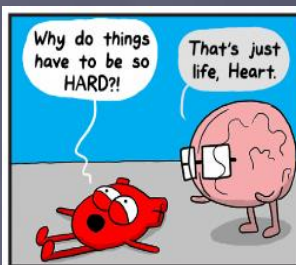
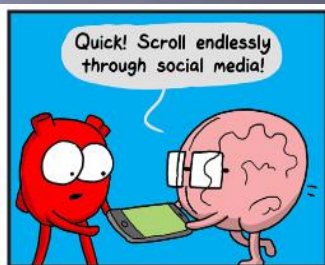
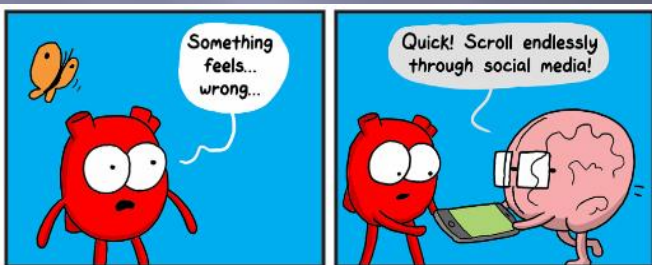
Instead... some things that may help include

- ▣ “I can’t imagine what you must be going through”
- ▣ “I am sorry you are experiencing this”
- ▣ “I don’t know what to say”

Sometimes it’s not what we say that helps, it’s our willingness to listen, to sit with another’s pain.

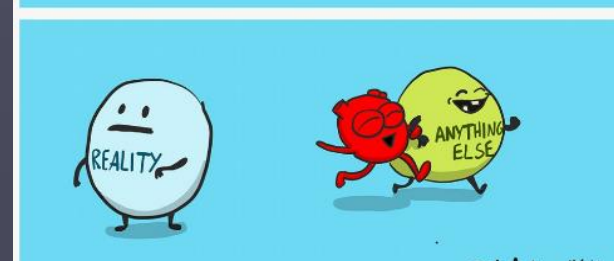
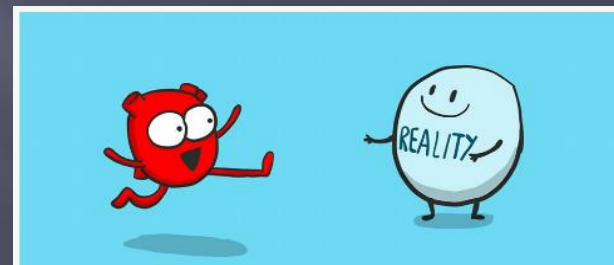
Approaches to Working with Grief

- ▣ Silence... let them be heard, allow for emotional expression.
- ▣ Ritual activities
- ▣ Narrative therapy work
- ▣ Creative Expression activities
- ▣ Healthy Boundary Setting activities
- ▣ Caring for Self, caring for others
- ▣ Heart brain vs Logic brain activities/processing



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Additional Resources

□ Grief Books

- Companioning the Bereaved, Dr. Alan Wolfelt
- When Breath Becomes Air, Paul Kalanithi
- The Bright Hour, Nina Riggs
- Being Mortal, Atul Gawande
- Bearing the Unbearable, Joanne Cacciatore
- The Wild Edge of Sorrow, Francis Weller
- It's Ok that You're Not Ok, Megan Devine
- Grief and the Expressive Arts, B.E. Thompson, R.A. Neimeyer
- Don't Ask for the Dead Man's Golf Clubs, Lynn Kelly
- I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye, Brook Noel
- Be Patient I'm Grieving, Gary Roe
- Understanding Guilt during Bereavement, Bob Baugher
 - And Many More!!...

□ Grief Websites

- WhatsYourGrief.com
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm/>

□ Grief Support – death-loss

- HeartLight Center, <https://www.heartlightcenter.org/>
- Agape Hospice, <https://www.agape-healthcare.com/>
- Denver Hospice, <https://thedenverhospice.org/our-services/denver-hospice-grief-center/>
- Compassionate Friends, www.compassionatefriends.org
- Judi's House, <https://www.judishouse.org/>



Questions?

