



Exploring Grief and Loss

A look at Grief, Loss,
Mourning, Coping Styles

Bereavement

bereavement noun

be-reev-ment | \ bi-ˈrēv-mənt ①, bē-ˈ\

Definition of *bereavement*

: the state or fact of being bereaved or deprived of something or someone

Examples of *bereavement* in a Sentence

// The following May, my wife and I flew to London for my father's funeral. Pam, determined to wrangle us an upgrade to business class on the strength of my *bereavement*, gave the British Airways ticketing clerk two passports and a sob story.
— John Haney, *Gourmet*, January 2003

// In the sections of her book that should prove an enduring contribution to the literature of grief, Ms. Gilbert recounts her free fall into widowhood, starting with that modern rite of *bereavement*, the erasing of the answering-machine message.
— James S. Kunen, *New York Times Book Review*, 19 Mar. 1995

- <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bereavement>

Grief

grief

noun

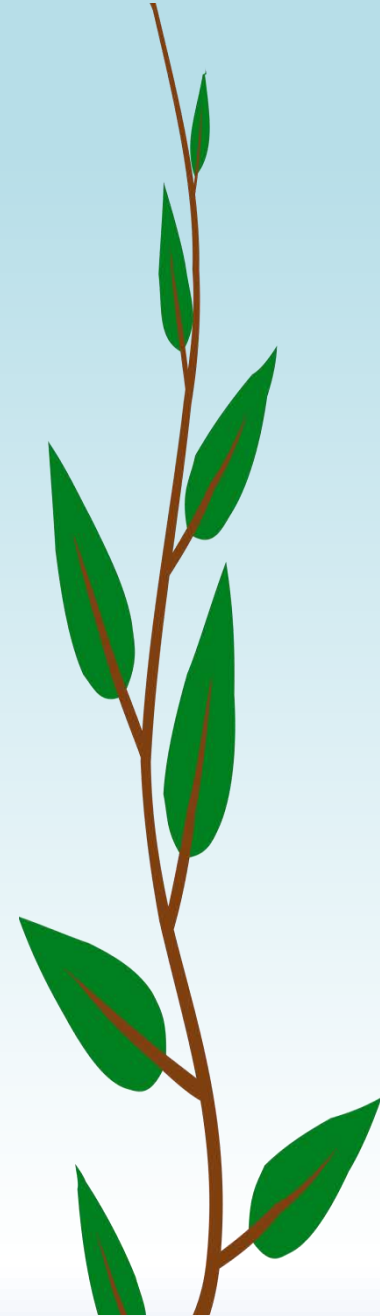
1. keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret.
2. a cause or occasion of keen distress or sorrow.

Idioms

3. **come to grief**, to suffer disappointment, misfortune, or other trouble; fail:
Their marriage came to grief after only two years.

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/grief>

Grief is an internal feeling one has in response to a loss



The Myths Behind
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross'
"Five Stages of Loss"

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

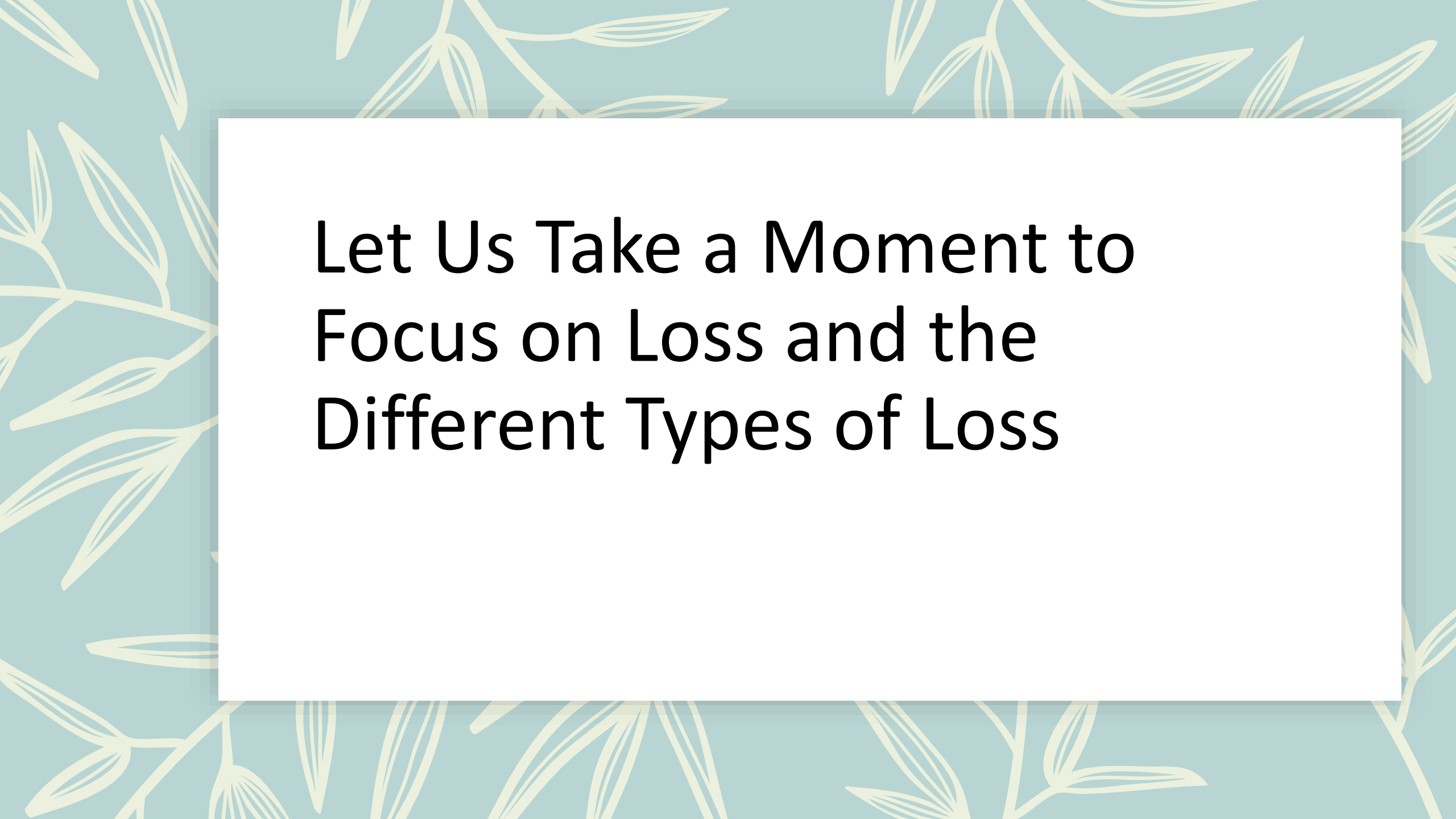


The Five Stages

.....

- Have evolved and are sometimes misunderstood
- Never meant to tuck messy emotions into neat packages
- Are responses to loss many people have but there is not a typical response to loss
- Are part of a framework to assist us in learning to live without the one we lost
- Are not stops on a linear timeline in grief
- Not everyone goes through all of them or in a prescribed order

• Kubler Ross & Kessler (2005) pg. 7.

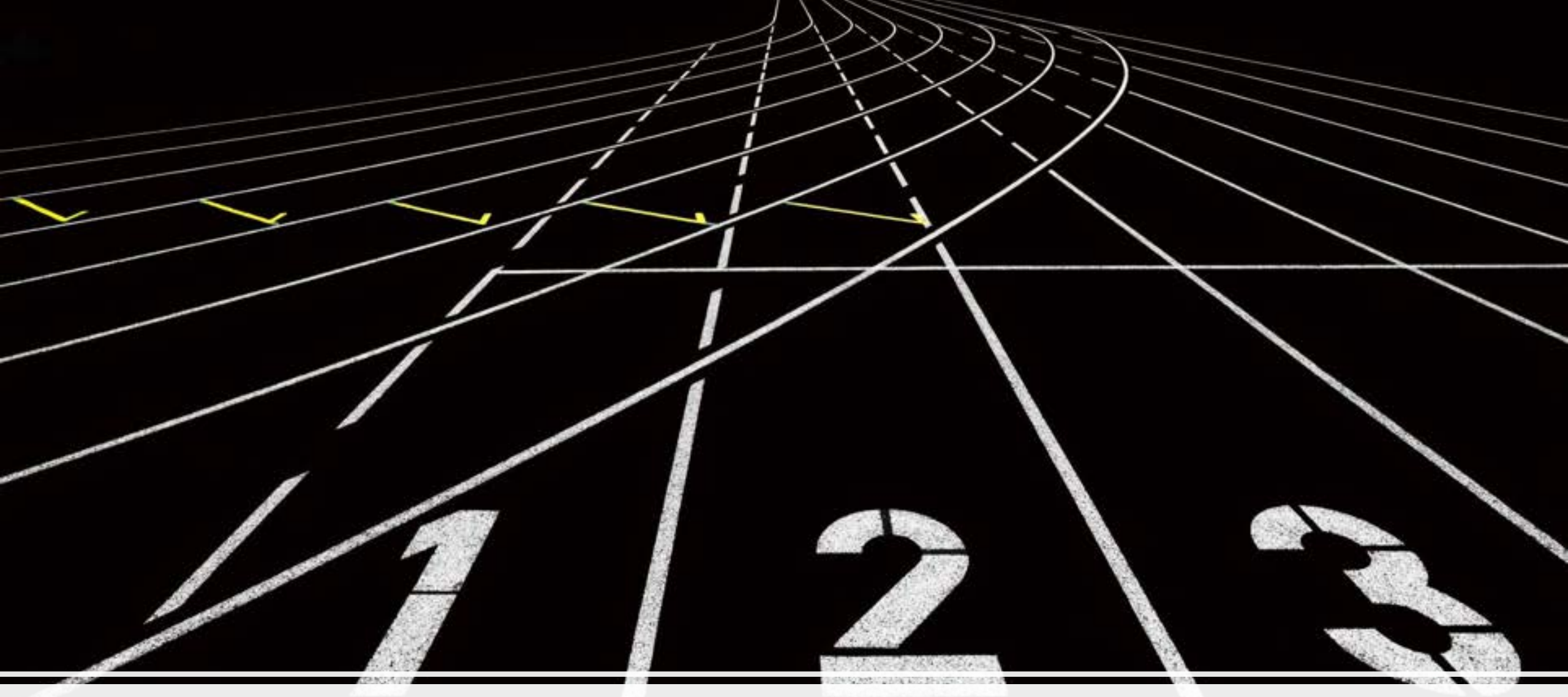


Let Us Take a Moment to
Focus on Loss and the
Different Types of Loss

Loss



- *“Loss is defined as any experience in which a valued person or object can no longer be touched, heard, known or experienced.”*
- *The value or expectation of the loss will coincide with the significance of how the loss is experienced*



Categories of Loss

Physical Loss

Is the loss of something tangible, it is no longer present



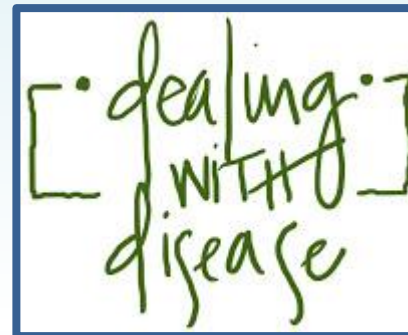
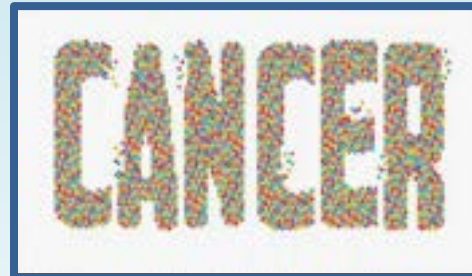
Relational Loss



Refers to the loss of a relationship with someone that the person had an attachment to

Symbolic Loss

- Is intangible, it can be the loss of someone's dreams or hopes.....



Comfort Cares



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Welcome to Holland



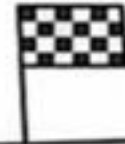
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Grief...

Your plan





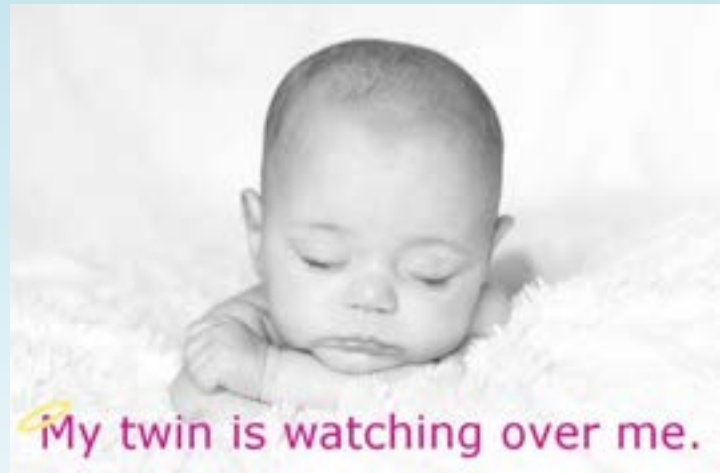
Complicated
Grief

Complicated Grief

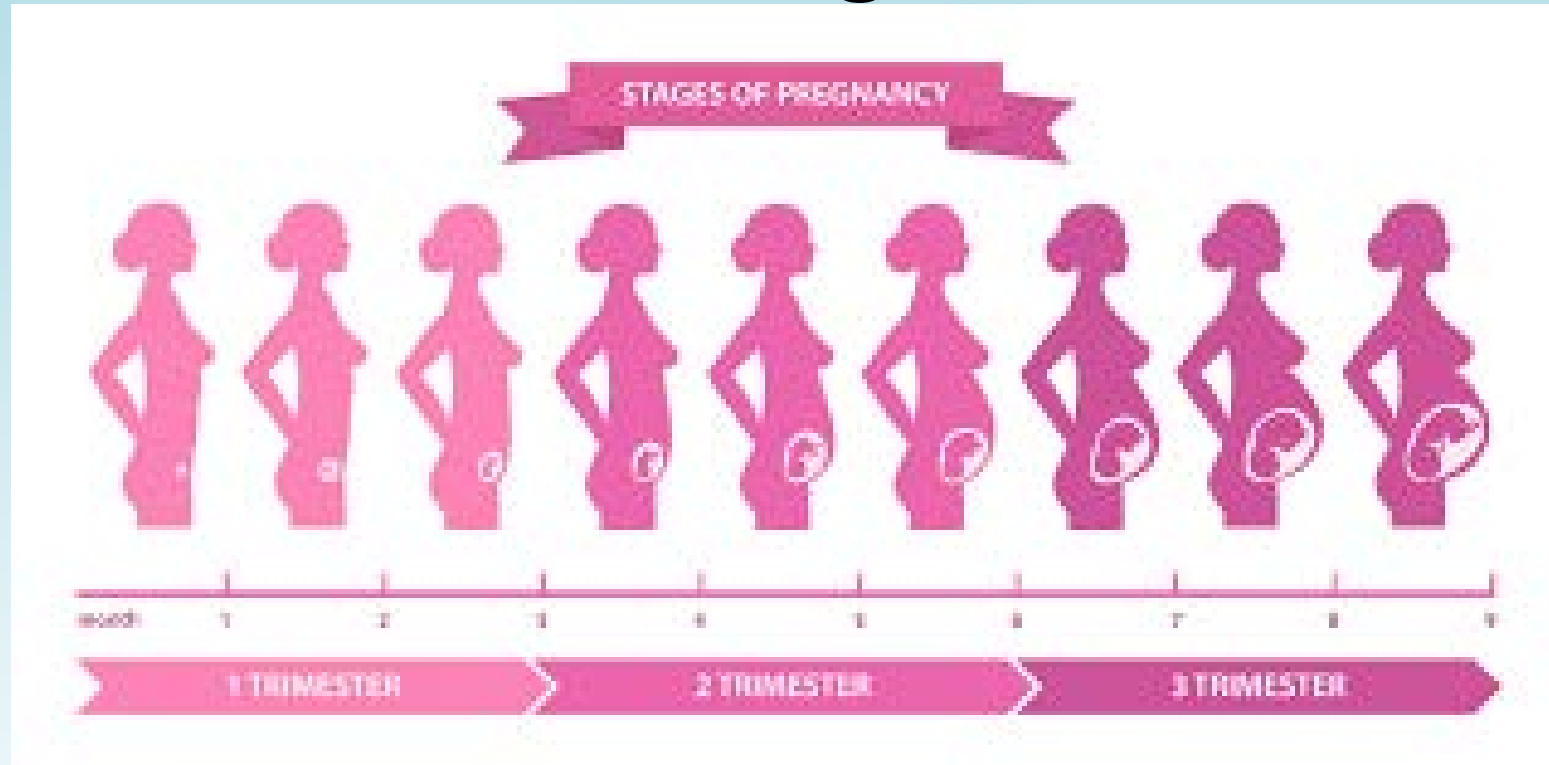
- Grief is always complicated, but what we call “complicated grief” is simply normal, necessary grief that has gotten extra complicated. It is stuck or off track somehow.
- Usually, complicated grief develops after an abnormally challenging loss, life, or relationship situation.
- Complicated grief is not an illness. It is not abnormal or pathological. Instead, it is a type or degree of grief that makes sense given the unique circumstances of the loss or relationship or personal issues.
- Though complicated grief is not an illness, people experiencing complicated grief often need professional help to get unstuck or back on track.

Sometimes Perinatal Grief may be Complicated.....

- By the person's previous experiences of loss and their treatment
- By the situation
 - For example – a surviving twin



Gestational Age and Loss



Does it matter when the loss occurred; 12 weeks, 25 weeks, or full term to determine the amount of grief a parent will experience? Is that measurable?

Researchers on this topic have not been able to find an association between the length of gestation and the intensity of grief, anxiety, or depression. A woman losing a child at 11 weeks gestation may be just as distraught as a pregnancy loss at 39 weeks gestation



The intensity of grief is dependent on the meaning of this pregnancy

An early loss

Families who experience an early loss may not feel supported as they mourn the loss of their child.

This may be due to a lack of understanding from society that their attachment to this baby began in **pregnancy**, not after delivery.

Also, significant anniversary or dates, such as what the due date would have been, may be difficult for these families.

Uniqueness of PERINATAL Loss

- The assumption that birth and pregnancy are rights of passage and will go as planned
- During hospitalizations when the patient dies it is the end of care..... For perinatal bereavement it may be the beginning of the patient's care



How Does One Cope in a World of Grief, Bereavement and or Loss?



https://spunout-images.s3.amazonaws.com/articles/_articleHeader/bereavement.jpg?mtime=20180731035904

Recognizing Different Coping Styles

Intuitive Styles of Coping

Instrumental Styles of Coping

Refer to Handout



One Style or Type
is
Not Better Than The
Other

When u have nothing in common with
your coworkers but pretend so u can
have a nice lunch





PERSONALITY TYPES KEY

E

Extroverts

Extroverts are energized by people, enjoy a variety of tasks, a quick pace, and are good at multitasking.

S

Sensors

Sensors are realistic people who like to focus on the facts and details. They apply common sense and past experience to find practical solutions to problems.

T

Thinkers

Thinkers tend to make their decisions using logical analysis, objectively weigh pros and cons, and value honesty, consistency, and fairness.

J

Judgers

Judgers tend to be organized and prepared, like to make and stick to plans, and are comfortable following most rules.

I

Introverts

Introverts often like working alone or in small groups, prefer a more deliberate pace, and like to focus on one task at a time.

N

Intuitives

Intuitives prefer to focus on possibilities and the big picture, easily see patterns, value innovation, and seek creative solutions to problems.

F

Feelers

Feelers tend to be sensitive and cooperative, and decide based on their own personal values and how others will be affected by their actions.

P

Perceivers

Perceivers prefer to keep their options open, like to be able to act spontaneously, and like to be flexible with making plans.

<https://assets.weforum.org/editor/3kl2hZ0guKiGPhEcTpiX794PB-1R9j3OIOfQtO8N1rE.JPG>

Examples in which patients and families may display their grief

Physical	Emotional	Social	Behavioral	Spiritual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hyper or under active • Headaches • Gastrointestinal problems • Chest pain • Pain • Crying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger • Sadness • Guilt • Loneliness • Longing • Regret • Relief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent • Withdrawn or Detached • Overly sensitive • Lack of pleasure or interest in previous activities • Impatience with others grieving the same loss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty concentrating • Forgetfulness • Slow thinking • Difficulty making decisions • Dreams or flashbacks • Need to retell the story • Mental confusion/brain fog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anger at higher power • Detachment or distance to higher power • Sense of closeness to higher power • Detachment from religious community • Questioning • Searching for a spiritual bond or connection with deceased

In addition to recognizing different coping styles, displays of grief, the value of the pregnancy, we need to recognize relationships within the family dynamics

- Parents
- Siblings
- Grandparents
- Gender Differences





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<https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Partners-Too-Marriage-2014.jpg>

Partners and Grief

“It has been shown that the greatest risk to a relationship is presented by unequal or non-congruent grieving processes between partners”



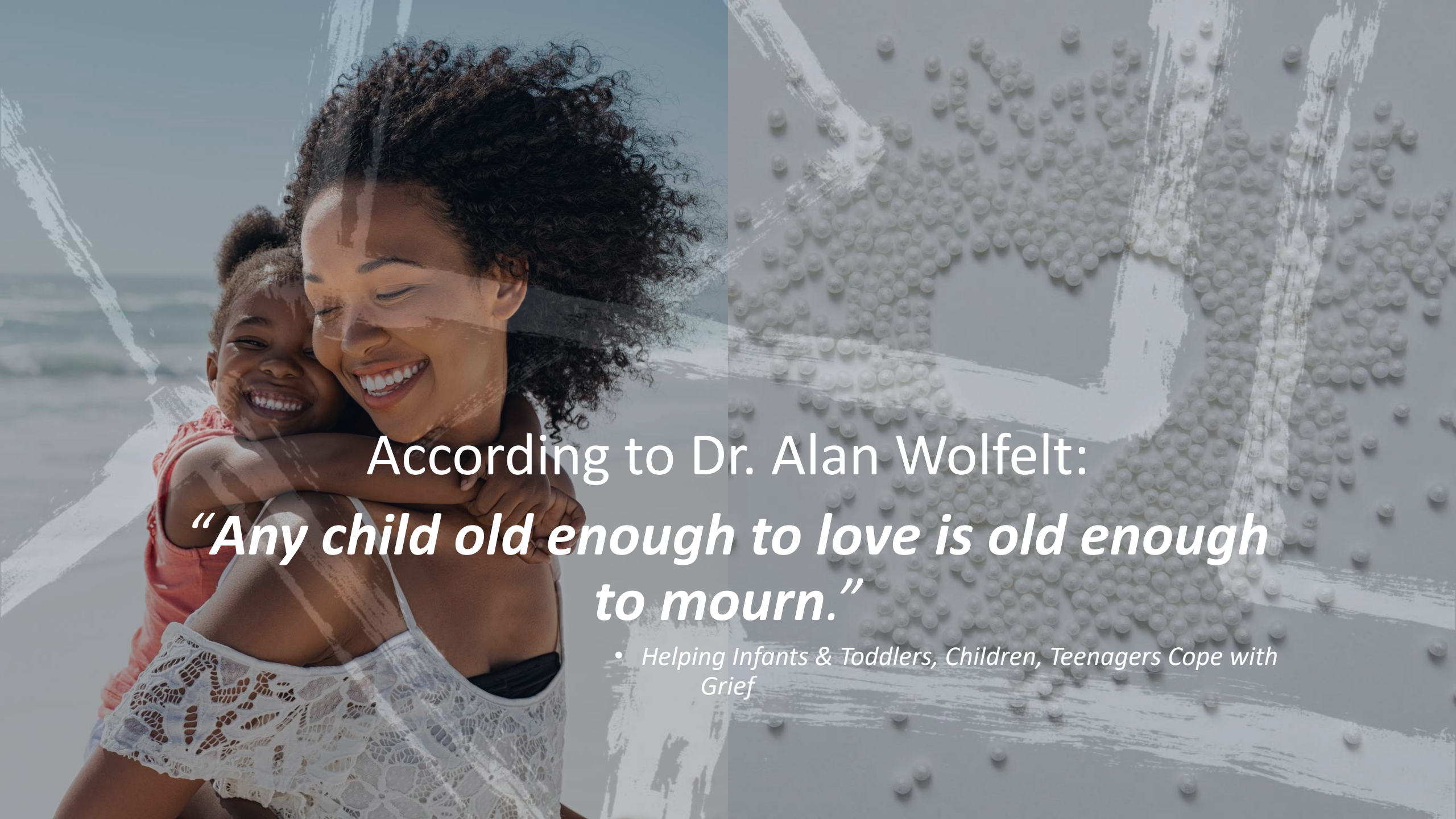
Siblings

Parents may struggle with how to, or how much, to involve the sibling(s) of the child that died. The parents will need to decide what they feel is appropriate for their child.

- “The most important factor in how children react to death is the response of the adults in their lives.”

• *Wolfelt, A. (2004) pg. 3*





According to Dr. Alan Wolfelt:
***“Any child old enough to love is old enough
to mourn.”***

- *Helping Infants & Toddlers, Children, Teenagers Cope with Grief*

Siblings

- Share with parents that talking about death is difficult in any circumstance, however explaining it to a child may be even more difficult.
- How a child grieves is influenced on:
 - Their developmental stage
 - Experience with death and dying
 - Parents and surrounding adult's response to the death



Siblings

Basic Guidelines:

- Most deaths for children and teenagers are sudden and unexpected
- Allow the child to lead the conversation
- Be honest and direct with your answers to their questions
- Use concrete terminology – death, dying, dead – avoid went to sleep, on vacation, passed or lost
- Allow space for silence – don't force engagement if they aren't talking or asking questions
- Avoid saying it is or they are okay – the situation is not okay - their sibling has died, and it is normal for everyone in the family to be sad “Tear Soup”
- Avoid stating to teenagers and older children that they need to be strong



Children Are Concrete Thinkers.....They need factual reasons for the Death

- It is acceptable to say you do not know why
- May be expressed in the following conversation:
 - “Do you know what the job of the heart is?” (They answer) “ Your sister’s heart stopped beating the way it is supposed to, and it could not be fixed.”



All Ages, at Parent's Discretion

- If a memorial service is planned, try and involve the child(children) in planning the memorial service



- Let them express their feelings through poetry, art, drawing, or creating their own mementos

» Please refer to the On-Line Age Specific Considerations Handout for more details

What About Grandparents?

Grandparents are grieving for the loss of the grandchild and for their own child who is experiencing this loss.



Grandparents

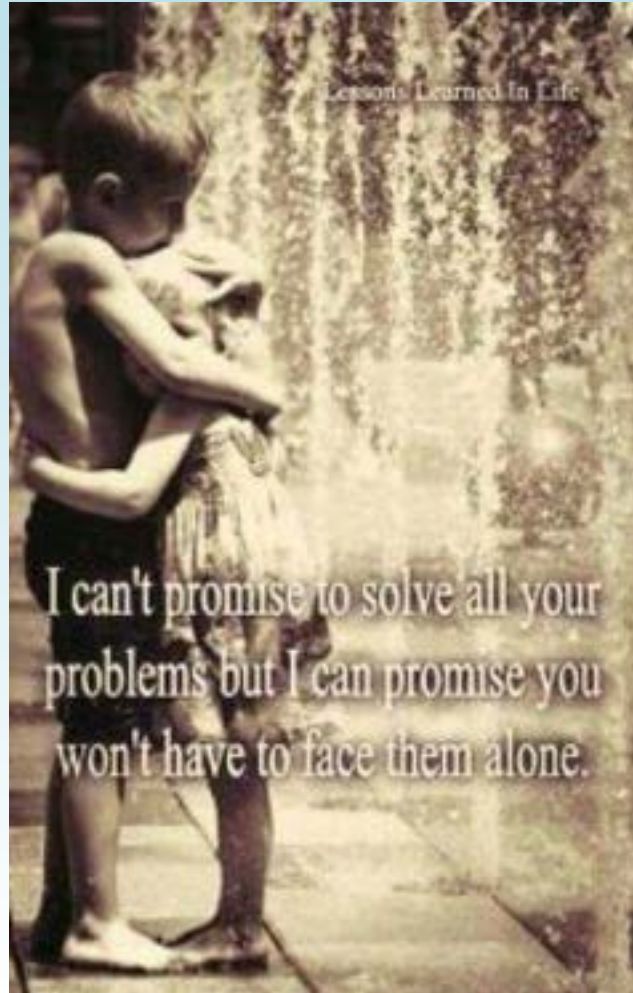
- This unique relationship can offer both comfort for the grieving parent or could be a source of tension.
- The grandparent is seeing their child suffer and that is incredibly difficult. The grandparent may not be forthcoming with their emotions for fear of further hurting their child.
- The parent that lost the child may want to protect their parent(s) from further pain and not fully disclose their grief.



Grandparents

- Articles addressing grandparents and the loss of a grandchild found that they felt isolated, didn't know where to turn for support, and had a hard time finding someone to listen to them
 - If you notice this with a family, you are caring for you can help. Contact pastoral care and see if they will come by to talk with the grandparent.

So How Can We Help.....



According to Megan Devine

“The removal of grief is not what we’re going for. Instead, we’re looking for companionship, acknowledgement, and the tools to make all of this just a little bit gentler on your heart and mind.”

Devine, M. (2021)

Companioning



Advantage of Companionship

- Relieves the burden of trying to predict the care but works off patient/family's cues
- Decreases the concern about saying the wrong thing as silence can be valuable – plan is based on patient's need and not our agenda
- Allows us to witness and honor the pain and loss without attempting to “fix” the pain or loss
- Allows us to be curious and help build a life-remembering experience



All Grief Needs to Be Witnessed

“Each person’s grief is as unique as their fingerprint. But what everyone has in common is that no matter how they grieve, they share a need for their grief to be witnessed. That doesn’t mean needing someone to try to lessen it or reframe it for them. The need is for someone to be fully present to the magnitude of their loss without trying to point out the silver lining.”

– David Kessler

- <https://www.goodgriefjourney.com/grief-blog/kessler-quotes>

The Million Dollar Question????



What do I say?



<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fambition.com%2Fblog%2Fentry%2F2016-12-07-importance-lead-validation%2F&psig=AOvVaw39n2B9zjTCidE1LMJJak53&ust=1712848757229000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CBIQjRxqFwoTCoi9IYH5t4UDFQAAAAAdAAAAABAE>

People in pain, appreciate and need your acknowledgement of their pain!

• Wolfelt, Alan (2024)

“I am sorry”

“Help me understand how you are really doing”

“It seems like you are really struggling with....., what can I do to help”

“I can hear how much you are hurting”

“I am here for you, and I want to listen”

“I am sad for you”

“How are you doing with all of this?”

“This must be hard for you (family, significant other etc.)”

“I am here to support and listen to you”

“I wish I had the right words to say to ease your pain”

“I wish you were not going through this”

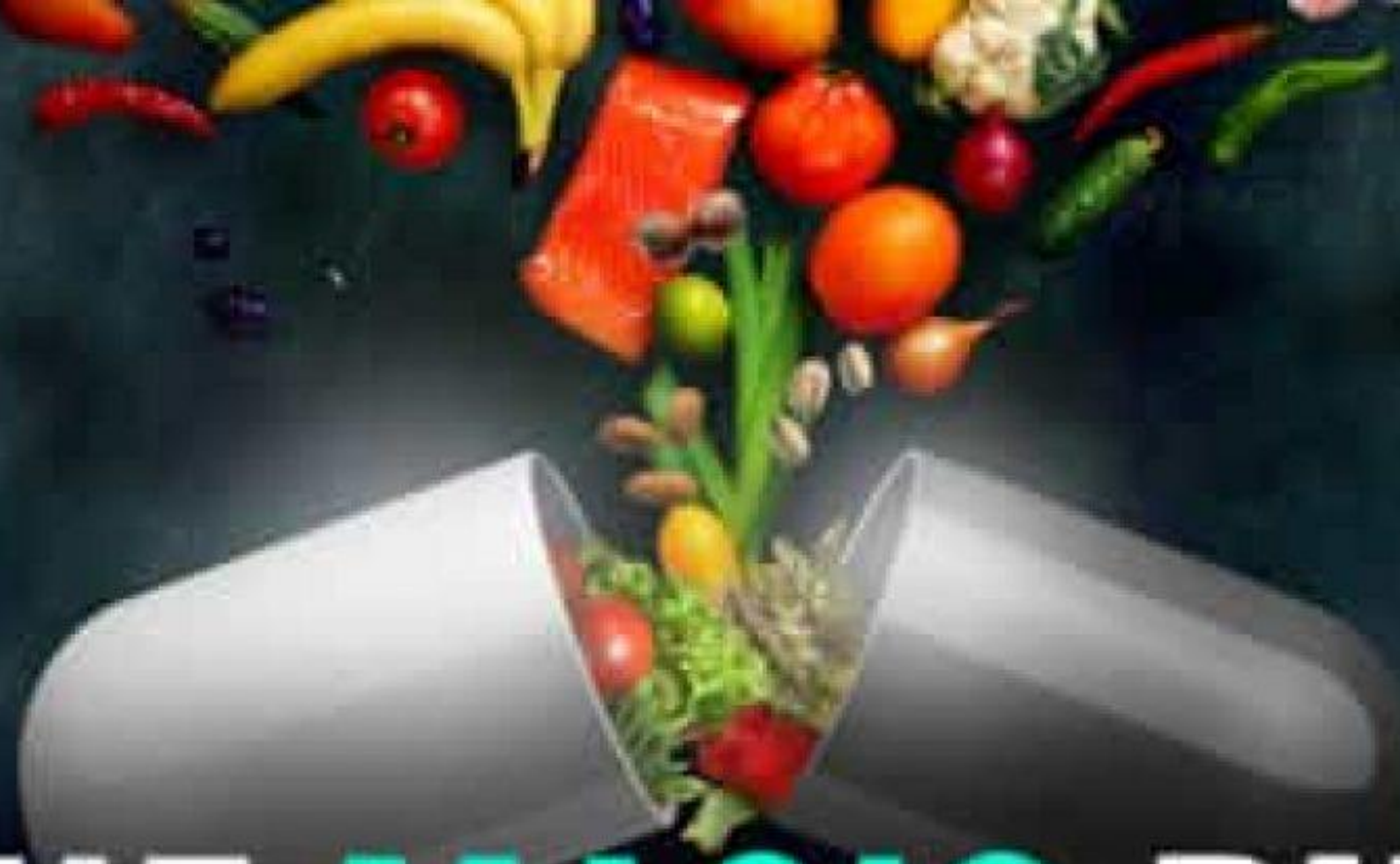
“I wish we were meeting under different circumstances”

“ I know I cannot take away all your pain, please know I am here to partner with you through this journey”



In Addition.....

- Avoid saying:
 - “I understand”
 - “I know how you feel”
 - “This could be so much worse...”
- Attaching a meaning to their loss – “God has a plan”, “Now you have an angel in heaven watching over you”
- Telling the patient or family how strong they are places added pressure on the patient and family



THE MAGIC PILL

Unfortunately, There is no MAGIC PILL



**HOWEVER, HERE
ARE SOME
SUGGESTIONS....**

Short Term – The Patient is on your unit

- Give verbal responses to show you are listening
- Use body language to show that you are listening
- Stay present and Validate & Acknowledge their feelings
 - “this must be very hard for you and your partner (family)”
- Strive to talk less and listen more
- If your assignment is overwhelming, please reach out for assistance – asking for help is not a sign of weakness but rather strength

Please Remember...

- We can show our support to patients and their families and to each other, in numerous ways:
 - *Understanding that people grieve in different ways*
 - *The process is individualized and dependent on many variables*
 - *There is no one way or correct way in which to grieve*
 - *Allowing yourself and others the right to feel is important, and having an avenue to express these feelings is vital*



Alan Wolfelt (2024)

*‘Sad isn’t Bad’ It
may be unpleasant,
but it is genuine
and how sometimes
life can
be.....*

Alan Wolfelt (2024)

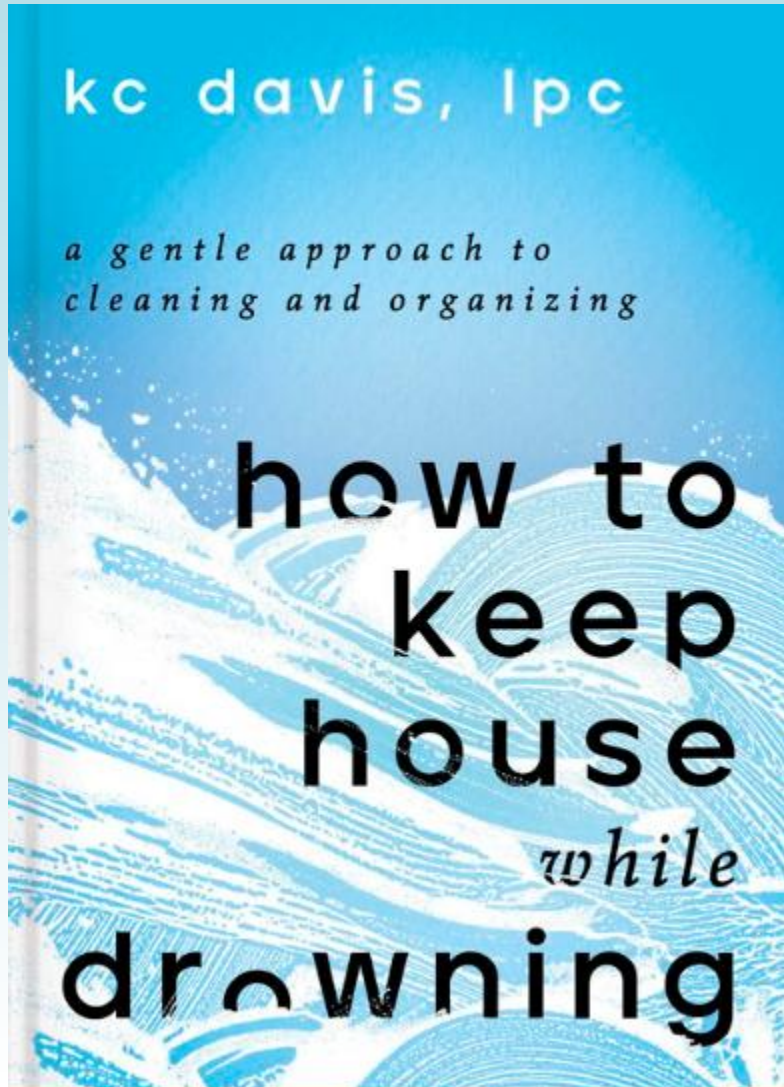


A man in a blue and white striped shirt is writing on a whiteboard with a blue marker. He is wearing a gold watch. In the background, several other people are looking at the whiteboard. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting an office or meeting room.

Long Term

*Focus on Functioning
from a Place of
Kindness and
Understanding*

CARE TASKS CONCEPT



- Examples of Care Tasks
 - Feeding
 - Cleaning
 - Health
 - Hygiene

For oneself or for those one is responsible for

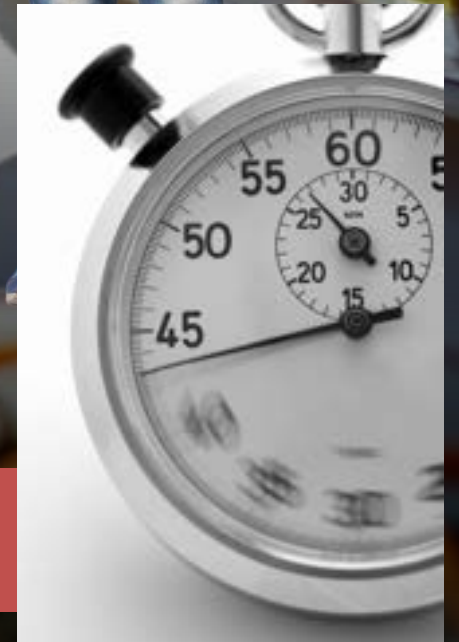
Thinking about what to eat?

How to get it?

Hey Mom I am
bringing 10 friends
over for dinner!

Eating

Really that simple?



Things to Keep in Mind Regarding Care Tasks:



Tasks that seem second nature for healthy persons can be sidelined in the instance of mental illness and physical instabilities



Even when a person is in a place of optimal mental and physical health, completion of care tasks can appear insurmountable in the face of some life changes.....



No one has limitless capacity to complete care tasks

Things that limit capacity

AN INEXHAUSTIVE LIST

- Mental illness
- Neurodivergence
- Sensory issues
- Physical disability
- Chronic illness/pain
- Postpartum
- Single parent households
- Grief and loss
- Trauma
- Emotional disorders
- Caring for small children
- Caring for special needs individuals
- Financial distress
- Abusive relationships
- Systematic racism & oppression
- Living through a pandemic

SELF CARE WITH SPOONS

Cost: 1 Spoon

- Wake up
- Get dressed
- Take your meds
- Watch a movie or tv show

Cost: 2 Spoons

- Shower or take a bath
- Go for a walk
- Do a craft/or read a book
- Cook a comforting dish

Be kind to others. You may not know if

- They have a chronic illness
- If they've experienced trauma
- are currently experiencing trauma and/or mental illness



Cost: 4 Spoons

- Exercise
- Go to work or school
- Go to appointment

EVERYONE STARTS THEIR DAY WITH A DIFFERENT NUMBER OF SPOONS

You can use spoons to take care of yourself, but once you use them, you need to wash them to use them again!
You can't use spoons you don't have!

Wash your spoons to use again!

Sleep, eat, be gentle to yourself, and draw on support from loved ones!

Cost: 3 Spoons

- Light housework
- Errands
- Reach out to a friend
- Work from home

In Closing

“When others care enough to listen, it's amazing how much better things can get just through the validation of existing feelings.”

<https://lifegoal.com/validation-quotes/#:~:text=%E2%80%9CValidation%20is%20a%20simple%20philosophical,the%20validation%20of%20existing%20feelings.%E2%80%9D>

