

7 Types of Grief and Loss

Grief is a normal and natural reaction to anything that that we lose that's important to us. It is not just about death.

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1. Non-Death Loss:

The loss of anything that is significant in a person's physical, psychological, spiritual, and interpersonal life. Throughout a person's life they may experience various non-death loss. Some may be minor and manageable while other losses feel devastating and life-altering.

2. Secondary Loss:

After experiencing a significant loss, there can be a ripple effect of subsequent losses. The primary loss causes a significant shift or fractures that there is a domino effect of loss related to various aspects of a person's life such as their finances, friends, community, worldview, faith, sense-of-self.

3. Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss happens when you are not entirely sure who or what you've lost. It is grieving someone who is still living. Ambiguous grief happens when something or someone changes or disappears. A person may be physically present, but psychologically absent (because of a mental illness, substance use, traumatic brain injury). It can be grieving someone who we can't physically be with. A person may feel torn between hoping things will return to normal and know their life, relationships as they knew before may be fading away.

4. Cumulative Loss:

Cumulative loss is the experience of suffering a new loss before having the opportunity to grieve the first loss or having multiple losses in a short amount of time. A commonly used expression in the English language for this type of loss is, "When it rains it pours". It's important to keep in mind that grief can show up in different times in our lives, it's common that any new losses can bring up memories and emotions about previous losses.

5. Nonfinite Loss:

Throughout the lifetime, people form ideas and dreams about how their life will turn out, the milestones they will reach. People imagine, make choices and work towards the life they want and/or need. However many times our life does not match up with our expectations. Many things can be out of our control such as not having the ideal job, partner, child or life they want. A person may carry nonfinite grief for a very long time as they are continuing to work towards achieving their hopes and dreams.

6. Anticipatory Grief

This is grief that occurs before any potential loss. This can occur at anytime a person may think that death is a possibility such as a caretaker who cares for someone with a terminal illness. A person may begin grieving aspects of the loss. Anticipatory grief does not mean that the person grieves any less, it means the loss is processed slowly and over time.

7. Disenfranchised Grief

When a person feels denied their right to grieve by friends, family, community or society. The person who is grieving does not receive the support or validation they need. Some people may only need validation from themselves while another may need acknowledgment from people in their lives or community. The impact of disenfranchised grief can leave a person feeling alienated, invalidated, ashamed, weak, etc.

Sources:

<https://childrengrieve.org/>

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/types-of-grief-2/>

<https://childrengrieve.org/resources/10-ways-to-help-a-grieving-child>

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/924b5436-fca0-4a15-901a-9233134766e4>

<https://indd.adobe.com/view/631f33bb-e0ff-403b-8e75-0e231f156245>

8 Ways to support your Grieving Student

1. Listen

It's important for your student to have a safe space to talk and share their feelings. Offering supportive listening and validating their feelings can help them learn how to express their emotions and create their own unique story. Allow them to ask you questions and answer them as best as you can honestly. It's okay to say to them "I don't know".

2. Allow Emotional Expression

Allow your student to have a safe space to express their emotions in a healthy way. Children and teens may be experiencing a wide range of emotions such as anger, sadness, pain, shame, guilt and many other powerful emotions. However they may not be able to verbalize it or may become upset or angry very easily. Avoid minimizing their emotions by telling them how they should feel. Allow them to engage in creative outlets such as journaling, drawing, sharing music, share stories on about their emotions.

3. Encourage Coping Skills

Support your student by helping them find healthy ways to cope with their emotions. Engaging in mindfulness activities, deep breathing meditation, yoga, taking breaks in between classes, going outside for a walk, engaging in art activities, etc. Help your student identify activities that work well for them and develop a plan for when these feelings begin to arise. Remember to be patient, and encourage multiple skills. What may work for one person or emotion may not work for the next. It's important not to give up.

4. Practicing Self-Care

Engaging in your own self-care practices is just as important as it is to support your student. It's important to care for your physical, psychological, spiritual, social and professional well being. You must care for your self first before you can support someone else. By engaging in your own self-care routine and implementing coping skills for yourself you can serve as a role model for your student.

5. Understand Grief Comes in Waves

Recognizing and allow your student to grieve in their own way. It's important to allow yourself and your student a chance to grieve and acknowledging that some days may be harder than other days. Be open about it to your student. Share when you are having a difficult day and encourage them to do the same. This can help prevent any misunderstandings.

6. Establish/Maintain Routines

With many changes happening rapidly with school and work that are out of our control. It is important to set up a routine and normalcy for your student to feel in control, supported, and comforted. Keep limits consistent and clear to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone.

7. Ask for Help

Finding your own support system such as friends, family and community you can go to when you need support. Encourage your student to identify friends, adults in their live who they can talk to when they need additional support. Identify local resources in your community that can help your student build their social support who can relate to and understand what they're going through.

8. Make New Memories

Remind your student that it's okay to also feel happy and create new rituals and traditions. Rituals and traditions can be a tangible way to acknowledge grief and honor the loss. Recognize special occasions, share stories Planning a virtual birthday parties, celebrating holidays, having a family game night, having a movie night, go for walks, etc.

Sources:

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