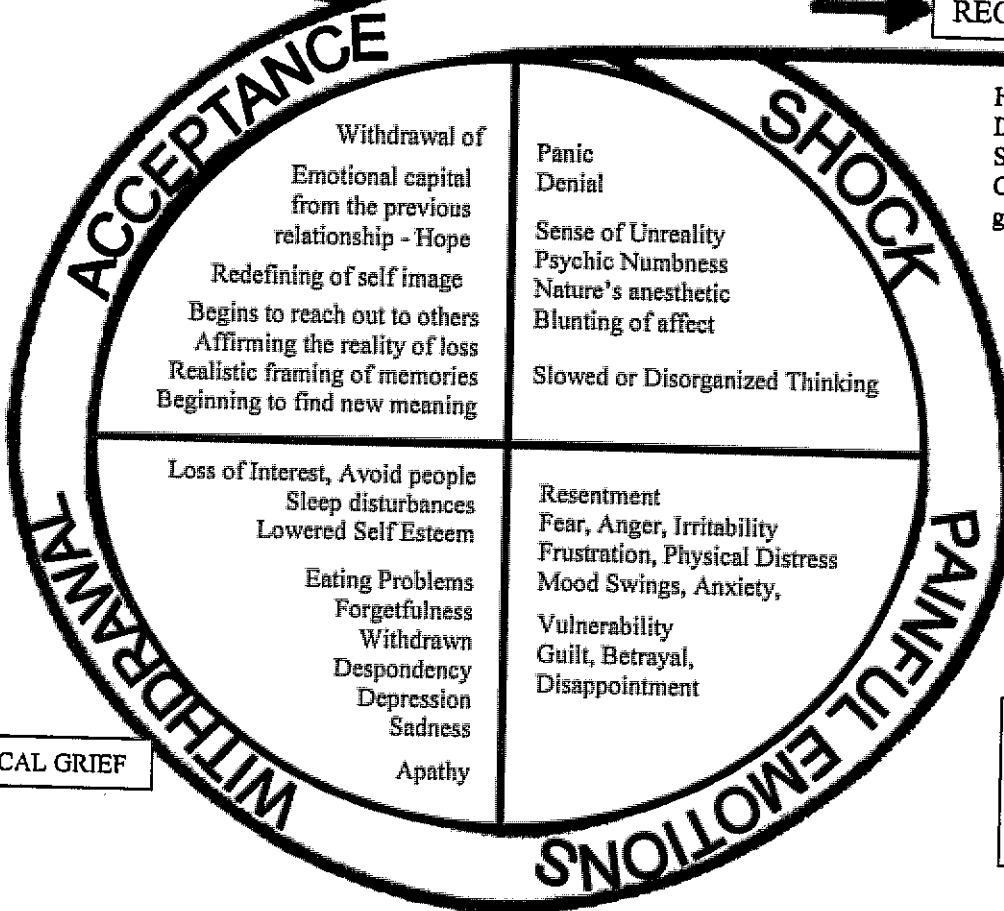


DEATH OF A LOVED

REORGANIZATION



Helping Others
Developing new relationships
Strengthening old relationships
Give yourself permission to grieve.

PATHOLOGICAL GRIEF

Issues of Secondary Losses

- Spouse
- Companion
- Cook/yardman
- Fix cars/

If you don't control the dynamics of the grief involved in loss – it will control you!
Issues of overreaction often a reflection of unresolved issues (Unfinished Business)

APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS YOU CAN HAVE FOR YOURSELF IN GRIEF

No one experiences grief in the same manner. Too often you have unrealistic expectations of yourself or others about grief. Dr. Theresa Rando, author of Grieving: How to go on Living When Someone You Love Dies, developed an excellent list of appropriate expectations. Use this list to see if you are maintaining realistic expectations for yourself.

YOU CAN EXPECT THAT:

- ❖ Your grief will take longer than most people think
- ❖ Your grief will take more energy than you would ever imagine.
- ❖ Your grief will involve many changes and be continually developing.
- ❖ Your grief will show itself in all spheres of your life; emotionally, socially, and physically.
- ❖ Your grief will depend on how you perceive your loss.
- ❖ You will grieve for many things both symbolic and tangible, not just the death alone.
- ❖ You will grieve for what you have lost already and for what you have lost for the future.
- ❖ Your grief will entail mourning not only for the actual person you lost, but also for all the hopes, dreams and unfulfilled expectations you held for and with that person, and for the needs that will go unmet because of the death.
- ❖ Your grief will involve a wide variety of feelings and reactions, not solely those that are generally thought of as grief, such as depression and sadness.
- ❖ Your loss will resurrect old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts of the past.
- ❖ You will have some identity confusion as a result of this major loss and because you are experiencing reactions that may be quite different for you.
- ❖ You may have a combination of anger and depression, such as irritability, frustration, annoyance or intolerance.
- ❖ You will feel some anger and guilt, or at least some manifestation of these emotions without warning.
- ❖ You may have a lack of self-concern.
- ❖ You may experience grief spasms, acute upsurges of grief that occur without warning.
- ❖ You may have trouble thinking (memory, organization, intellectual processing) without warning.
- ❖ You may feel like you are going crazy.
- ❖ You may feel obsessed with the death and preoccupied with the deceased.
- ❖ You may begin a search for meaning and question your religion and/or philosophy of life.
- ❖ You may find yourself acting socially in ways that are different than before.
- ❖ You may find yourself having a number of physical reactions.
- ❖ Society will have unrealistic expectations about your mourning and may respond inappropriately to you.
- ❖ You may find that there are certain dates, events and stimuli that bring upsurges in grief.
- ❖ Certain experiences later in life may resurrect intense grief for you temporarily.

Taken from Make Today Count Newsletter.

ISSUES OF THE "FIRSTS"

One of the areas that the survivor of a loss of a significant person need to be aware off in their lives is has to do with what is often referred to as the "firsts!" So often, especially with the loss of a parent or of a spouse, there is the unexpected impact of grief as it relates to the "firsts"...the first anniversary, the first family dinner, the first birthday, the first trip without the significant other. There are patterns that have developed in life that we often take for granted that will can be firsts...the first time to do laundry, cooking dinner, going shopping, going to the movies, to church, going to McDonalds every Wednesday morning for coffee and meet with friends...all of these and many more have a way of often catching persons by surprise by the sudden sense of loss and the onset of grief symptoms. It is not unusual for loved ones to not understand why they feel like they are feeling depressed, lack of energy a month or so before a significant event in that has taken place in their lives. The mind and the body remembers even if one does not consciously remember...for years, between April and June, I would go into these depressions and not even know why. One day, I was alone in my parent's home, both had died, and I was going through the picture albums that were in the house. The next day, I developed a splitting migraine. I had gone to Kauai to attend a Board of Director mtg and after the meeting came back to Oahu to attend another Board mtg of another organization. I still had the migraine and a good friend, fellow board member, said, "Glenn, can I help you take that weight off your shoulders?" For some reason, it triggered something in my mind that allowed me to understand why, year after year, I was going through these depressive moments. On May 3, on our son's first birthday, when my father was supposed to have come from Kauai to celebrate with us, he died. We would celebrate our son's birthday every year...plans would be made as to gifts and where we would have dinner as a family, however, my father's death was not remembered, consciously, however, my body remembered, though we were celebrating there was that reality that it was on that date, my father died. Once I became aware of that, the depression never returned. When there is the unexpected sense of grief, try to see if it is related somehow to a first!

HARVESTING THE FRUITS FROM THE LIFE OF THE DECEASED

Henri Nouwen in his book, *LETTERS OF CONSOLATION*, asks the question of himself and of his father in discussing his mother's death, "Where do we see the harvest of mother's death?" When the deceased was alive, there were so many roles that were divided, "our culture certainly encourages that: mother for the children, you for earning a living; mother to be gentle and forgiving, you to be strict and demanding; mother hospitable and receptive, you reserved and selective." With the death of a loved one, those roles cease to exist, however, the influence of those roles help us to reintegrate within ourselves that which were always a part of our lives but "remained somewhat dormant in mother's presence." The significant task of those who remain is to reap the harvest of the life of the deceased and to believe that somehow, the death of a loved one will, in time, "make us stronger, freer and more matured." "What is important for us to recognize it that mother's death invites us to see her death as a death that can bring us not only grief, but joy, not only pain, but healing, not only the experience of having lost but also the experience of having found." It is possible that the death of a loved one, in time, can lead to a rich harvest. It then becomes a matter of focus. If the vision is only one of tragedy and loss, then the death is one of life's absurdities. However, if the vision is one in which life is seen as a gift, then death may, in time, be seen as a gift in which there is personal growth on our part.

READJUSTMENT TO THE ALTERED ENVIRONMENT

For those who have lost a spouse, one of the most immediate experiences of the altered environment is that of doing things by oneself, rather than as a couple. A husband's first awareness of this was attending a dinner for the softball team, where he and his wife would often be seated with other couples, and the year after, he was seating with the single men. Our society is very much based on the concept of Noah's ark...two by two. The most difficult immediate situations are at dinner time and bed time. Diets change, often for the worse; sleep patterns also change, often with a restlessness that leaves one tired. The home, once a place of security and respite is somehow seen as being a foreign land, and often without intending to, avoided because it is easier not facing the loneliness and awkwardness that seem to be present in what was once a very welcoming environment. Society treats couples differently than it does singles and it is hard to make the adjustments.

Two significant areas that survivors need to monitor, or where their friends and family can help monitor is that of eating and sleeping patterns. It is normal for some changes in the normal patterns of eating and sleeping to take place due to the normal occurrence of depression that follows the death of a loved one. However prolonged patterns of not eating right and having problems with sleeping can indicate a more serious issue of depression that need to be attended to before it begins to move into being a pathological problem.

STRESS TIPS

1. Get a physical checkup from 1 to 3 months after spouse's death.
2. Be sure to get enough rest. If you find yourself sleeping for long periods of time and always feeling tired, you may be in early stages of chronic depression.
3. Exercise on a regular basis. Even walking a few blocks a day can help you emotionally and physically.
4. Eat good balanced meals. You need to do this now more than ever, so avoid "binge" eating. If your appetite is poor, eat frequent small meals.
5. Don't isolate yourself. Have at least one person you can confide in. Participate with people regularly. It can work wonders.
6. Don't try and get through the grieving process all by yourself. Don't hesitate to ask for help. It is a gift to allow someone to help you when you need it.
7. Seek psychological help if you are questioning your ability to cope.
8. Be aware of your ability to cry. If you can't cry, you may be suppressing emotion. Eventually that may lead to problems.
9. Learn a few stress-reduction techniques and practice them. There are several, such as visualization, progressive relaxation and deep breathing. They may seem awkward at first, but they are well worth it. Ample resources exist within the community to learn these techniques.
10. Allow all your thoughts and feelings to surface naturally. Thoughts and feelings are not bad or wrong in and of themselves; they are just thoughts and feelings, and only as significant as YOU make them.

Special thanks to Jean Barry Walker, MS, Kuakini Medical Center for the preparation on Stress Tips.