

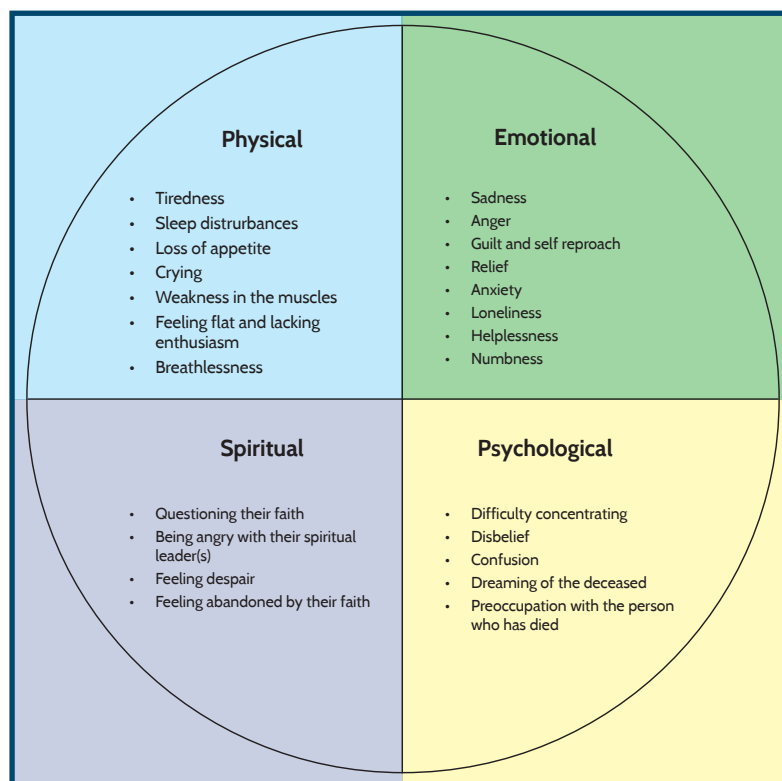
GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss.

“The feelings that go with it are normal and natural, as is the need to express those feelings, without guilt and without fear. Grief itself rarely destroys people. But the way in which those who grieve are treated by others can destroy.” (Parker, M. A Time to Grieve).

People who have experienced a significant loss may find themselves experiencing any of the reactions in the diagram below. Remember what you are experiencing is a normal and natural part of grieving.

Grief and loss can affect us for many different reasons. It is not only brought on by the death of a loved one. Other losses people may experience during their lives include the loss of a job, relationship, property, dreams and goals or pets. Grief is a personal and individual experience and will affect everyone differently. There are no right or wrong reasons to grieve.



When we are grieving the loss of a loved one there are four processes we need to work through. Most people do not move in a linear progression through these processes, but move backwards and forwards through them. They are:

- To accept the reality of their loss
- To work through the pain of grief
- To adjust to the environment in which the deceased person is missing
- To emotionally re-locate the loved one and move forward with life. (William Worden 1991)

How can I deal with my grief?

Name the loss we have experienced:

- Give it a voice. In the naming, we retain power over the experience, not a victim to it. This helps us to move from a state of denial.
- Find others who respect our experience, who themselves are not in denial about the experience.
- Reach out to people who support you. This may include joining a specific group.

Give yourself permission to grieve:

- Give voice to the range of feelings you are experiencing.
- Share with someone you trust will understand.
- Express your experience through journaling, art work, writing letters to the deceased person.
- Accept any anger around loss, and find ways to resolve this which don't harm you or anyone else. Avoid blaming, accusing, taking retributive action.
- Seek professional counselling support if you are feeling alone and overwhelmed by your experience, or feeling stuck in it.

Re-construct our life:

- Exercise regularly, maintain healthy sleep habits, and eat a healthy diet.
- Use alcohol and any other substances in moderation.
- Take time to do the activities which you have always enjoyed, even if at the moment, the experience seems empty.
- When you feel ready, create new structures and routines.
- Give yourself permission to do things where you don't feel and think about your loss. It is okay to have some respite from the painful thoughts and feelings.

Remember to tune in and see what you need through your journey of grieving. There is no right or wrong way to feel, our feelings just are what they are.



How can I help an employee who is grieving the loss of a loved one?

- Offer condolences.
- Ask about their loss.
- Ask about the deceased person.
- Listen and validate their feelings and needs.
- Empathise with their experience by imagining how you might feel in their shoes.
- Reassure them that their grief reactions are normal.
- Tell them of the bereavement leave they can use, and of any other supports your business/organisation can provide.
- Reassure them that work comes second.
- Ask them how they want you to keep in contact with them.
- Ask them how much information they would like their co-workers to know.
- Ask if they wish to be contacted by colleagues.
- Be aware that people have different ways of dealing with loss – it is important to be supportive of how this person needs to deal with it.
- Identify with them their strengths and resources.
- Reassure them of their worth.
- Offer them external counselling support.



Our EAP Program

EAP is a free service to support you through difficult or challenging times that may occur at home or at work. To find out more about the EAP services your organisations offers please call 1300 364 277. All calls are confidential.

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