

More information is available through our website:
[www. quakeragingresources.org](http://www.quakeragingresources.org)

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED RESOURCES:

Agnes Whitaker, Editor, All in the End is Harvest, an Anthology for Those Who Grieve, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1984

Deborah Morris Coryell, Good Grief, Healing Arts Press, 2007

Ronna Fay Jevne and James E. Miller, Finding Hope: Ways to See Life in a Brighter Light, Willowgreen Publishing, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1999

Lucille Clifton, Everett Andersons Goodbye (A children's book that captures the stages of grief in beautiful simplicity relevant to any age)

Fred Rogers, Mr. Rogers Talks with Parents (A parenting book that covers many topics and has a beautiful, simple approach to grief and dying)

Joan Halifax, Being With Dying, Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death, Shambala Publications, Boston, 2009

<http://journey-through-grief.com>

<http://www.griefsupportservices.org>

<http://journeyofhearts.org>

Grief



*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they shall be comforted.*

The Beatitudes



Aging Resources Consultation Help



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Grief, the intense sadness that comes after a loss, manifests in many forms, is different for everyone, and often impossible to put into words. Though universally experienced, it can be isolating. Reminding us of our aloneness in how it affects each person differently, it is something that one must go through in one's own way. It can numb, enrage, or level a person all in one day. Grieving persons may experience anxiety, depression, fear, physical aching, or feel blindsided, experiencing an intensity of feeling they have never experienced before. Some may experience giddiness, or other seemingly inappropriate emotions. Those who have grieved and who work with grieving people agree, there is no way around it, only through it.

In 1969, Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross identified five stages of grief:

- Denial – A sense of unreality, this cannot be happening. One may feel numb, unable to process emotions. This may help us cope with loss without being completely overwhelmed.
- Anger – A sense of unfairness. A person may become angry at the one who died, oneself, family members, or doctors.
- Bargaining – This may take place before the loss. Bargaining with God, with family members, with one who is leaving... “I’ll be a better person if...”
- Depression-- Overwhelming sadness, frustration, hopelessness. People may experience changes in sleep patterns, eating habits, even thoughts of suicide. Always refer to professional help if thoughts of suicide are expressed or suspected.
- Acceptance-- The loss is accepted as permanent, and thoughts turn to moving on and finding the good in life again. One realizes that life must go on and begins to take steps toward living again. This does not mean the loss is forgotten or that sadness is gone for good, but that we can cope. People may become resigned, rather than accepting, and this may indicate that the person needs further help in coping with their loss.

“What we must do...with God’s help, is to accept sorrow as a friend, if possible. If not, as a companion with whom we will live for an indeterminate period, for whom we have to make room as one makes room for a guest in one’s house, a companion of whom we shall always be aware, from whom we can learn and whose strength will become our strength. Together we can create beauty from the ashes and find ourselves in the process.” Elizabeth Gray Vining, 1952, PYM Faith and Practice

Though stages of grieving have been identified, not everyone goes through these stages in the same pattern. How then, can we help others or ourselves through the grieving process?

Supporting a Grieving Person:

- Do not expect people to grieve a certain way, follow a specific pattern, or stick to a timeline. Expectations that grief should end within an allotted time are unrealistic and arbitrary.
- Validate and accept whatever a person is feeling-- numbness, anger, confusion, sadness. Feelings are not right or wrong, they just are.
- Do not ignore or avoid the loss. If you do not know what to say, just listen and be present. Some people may process their loss by repeating the story. Be willing to listen again.
- Provide physical comfort and practical support – food, housework, organization, help with childcare, outdoor chores.
- Genuine empathy can be helpful. Letting a person know that you have experienced similar feelings, if this is true, may alleviate loneliness and provide comfort that this pain will not last forever. However, try to avoid comparisons that set up expectations. Acknowledge that each of you will have a unique experience, but that you will be beside the person no matter what.
- Provide information about professional resources, support groups and counseling. Offer rides and support as needed.
- Seek immediate help if thoughts of suicide are expressed.

Traumatic or Complicated Grief: Grief after a trauma, such as an accident, violent, sudden or painful death may be exacerbated by post traumatic stress disorder. There is increasing evidence that in such cases, treating the person for post traumatic stress is important for a healthy grieving process. Often the focus is on the person who has died and the trauma to family members is overlooked. A professional evaluation should be conducted to be certain that appropriate treatment occurs.