

Bereavement and Loss Workshop Part 1

What is grief and how do
we experience it?



From Newcastle. **For the world.**

What is bereavement and grief?

Bereavement can be described as 'to be deprived' of our loved one.

Grief is experienced as 'immense loss'. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2020).

Time limited? – No, despite what society says grief is not limited to time. You should not 'be over' the loss of a loved one after a certain amount of time.

Grief can be felt emotionally and physically.

How do you notice your grief?

5 Stages of Grief (Kubler Ross 1969).

This is not a linear process, it is common to move forwards and backwards along these stages. This is normal and does not mean you are going backwards in your journey through grief. It is also possible that you may not experience some or any of these stages.



Stage 1 - Denial

In order to protect ourselves from the reality of loss, we can engage in the defence mechanism of denial.

Denial helps us carry on (to a certain extent) with day to day life, it can help us feel our loved one is still alive and can help us to focus on other areas of our life.

Denial helps us to only let in what we can manage, bit by bit.

Stage 2 - Anger

As denial begins to wear off, we still may not be in a place to face the reality of our loss and pain. This pain can be expressed through anger.

Anger is a normal and understandable emotion to feel when we have lost someone who is important to us.

Stage 3 - Bargaining

Even if we aren't religious we can often start to wonder if pleading with a higher power may bring our loved one back.

“What if I devote my life to helping others, then all of this will just have been a bad dream”

These thoughts can also occur when we remember time spent with our loved one – “what if I had noticed their symptoms sooner?”

Stage 4 - Depression

Depression may occur when reality *really* sinks in.

Intense sadness, decreased sleep, reduced appetite, and loss of motivation are common. These symptoms are most often a normal way of reacting to a significant loss.

Grief however may progress into a clinical depression if for example these feelings are very prolonged, affect our ability to function day to day and are associated with suicidal thoughts.

Stage 5 - Acceptance

In this stage of grief, we are able to accept the reality of our loss and the fact that nothing can change that reality.

Acceptance does not necessarily mean that we are “okay” with the loss.

We can begin to feel some sense of inner peace, rather than constant turmoil.

Primary and secondary losses from someone dying

Primary losses

The death and absence of the loved one. Not seeing them or speaking to them on a regular basis.

Secondary losses

These come from the chain reaction triggered by the death of someone. For example the loss of doing things with that person, loss of the future together, loss of ability to function at work, loss of financial security, loss of friendships due to lack of support, loss of energy etc.

The dual process model of coping with bereavement

(Stroebe and Schut, 1995)

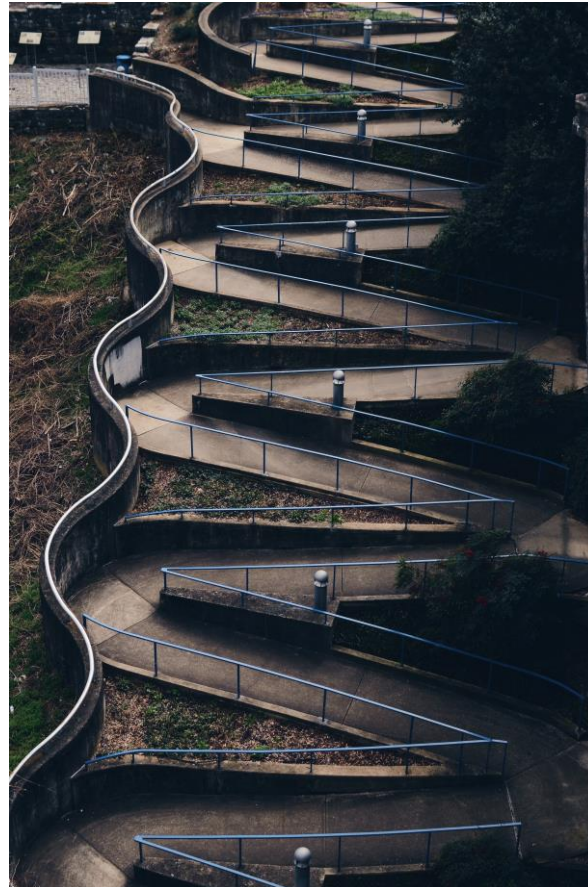
When we grieve we often find that we weave in and out of grieving and 'normal life'. We weave between facing our grief and working through it, to avoiding it and focusing on other things. Again this is normal, but often brings about feelings of guilt.

An example may be enjoying the company of friends and laughter, but then thinking 'this isn't okay I should be feeling sad'.

The dual process model of coping with bereavement

(Stroebe and Schut, 1995)

**Do you notice
that you weave
in and out of
focusing on
your loss?**



**And then
restore yourself
in different
ways?**

Examples of the dual process model in real life

Loss orientated

Loss orientated tasks are things we do which focus on the loss and pain we are experiencing.

This may involve thinking about and missing your loved one, looking at old photos, or recalling particular memories. These can provoke powerful emotions, such as sadness, loneliness and anger and is how we process what has happened and our feelings.

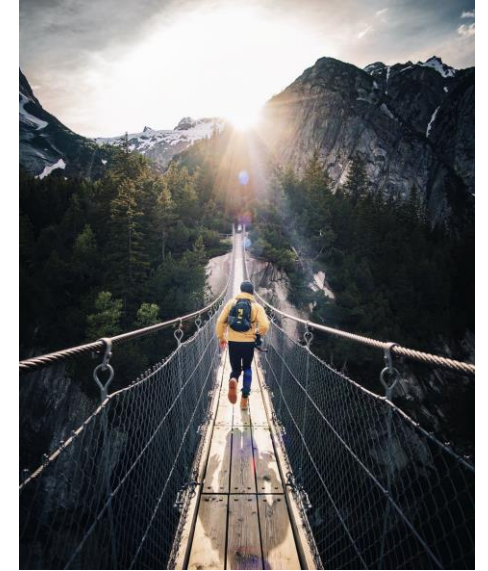
Restoration orientated

Restoration-oriented tasks let you get on with daily life and distract you from your grief for a while. These include working, cleaning, watching a funny TV show, going out with friends, or doing exercise etc. You may think that repressing or ignoring emotions is unhealthy. In some cases this is the case. Stroebe and Schut argue it is actually a normal way of coping with grief. It is our mind's way of easing the pain a little and giving us at least a few moments where we can get important practical tasks done.

Loss orientated



Restoration Orientated



The dual process model

What this model allows us to do is slowly, bit by bit, process our grief. This can be particularly helpful if the death has been sudden, traumatic or was someone we were particularly close to.

In what ways do you notice you change between being loss orientated and restoration orientated?

**Any reflections or questions
before we bring today's session
to a close?**

Next week - Part 2

In part 2 of this bereavement and loss workshop we will look at strategies that you may find helpful in managing your own journey through grief and loss.

Please bring any topics/questions you have for next time – these can be emailed to us prior to the workshop and can be answered if you prefer.

After today's workshop

Self care following today's workshop is highly recommended due to the nature of what we have spoken about. Self care refers to anything you can do for yourself which makes you feel better. Give yourself permission if you need to take it easy after the work shop and focus on restoration, try not to add any pressure to yourself and find time to relax.

What do you class as self care? Some ideas include having a relaxing bath, reading a book, cooking a tasty meal, going for a walk or calling a friend. Find 1 thing that resonates with you.