



May 2022: Managing Grief

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***“The pain passes, but the beauty remains.” – Pierre
Auguste Renoir***

Welcome to the **May 2022 edition of TotalWellbeing**, your guide to the **8 dimensions of wellbeing**. This month we will explore grief, how grief affects us, some of the common stages of grief, and self-care tips to keep in mind when experiencing grief.

Grief is a part of life. This is an unfortunate fact, but one that every person has to face during their life. The way that each of us experiences and reacts to grief can vary depending on a number of personal factors and history. Likewise, what we each need to heal can also be very different. There is no getting around the fact that grief can be a very hard emotion to cope with effectively. What can help is better understanding the stages of grief as well as how support and self-care can be utilized during these difficult times. To help with this, check out the grief and self-care tips below.

Please remember that your EAP is here for you if you need to address grief, loss, or just need to talk to someone. You have access to free and confidential counseling, wellness coaching, trainings, unlimited work/life referrals to save you time, and more. Plus, an online resource library full of proactive self-help tools! Visit [PersonalAdvantage](#) for helpful articles, personal and professional development tools, and more!

To your total wellbeing,

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Help for When You're Grieving

A loved one leaves on a military assignment, divorce papers are signed, a parent or a favorite pet passes away.

"Any loss -- and even an impending loss -- can bring on feelings of grief," according to Karl Goodkin, M.D., Ph.D., professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and professor of neurology at the University of Miami School of Medicine in Miami, Fla., and professor of psychology at the University of Miami Graduate School.

The grief process often brings with it shock or emotional numbness, followed by feelings of depression, anger, guilt or helplessness. Grieving always hurts, but it's not a bad thing, Dr. Goodkin says. It's a very normal and necessary process for adjusting to difficult life changes.

Healthy grieving

"Major changes, such as new management, downsizing or a company buyout, can result in a feeling of panic," says Susan Starr, a human resource consultant and owner of H2O Marks, a Dallas-based marketing company.

"Most people seem to be able to process loss on their own, not just within their own thinking and coping, but also by getting support from their family, friends and personal social networks," says Dr. Goodkin.

"Tapping into social support at this time is perhaps the best predictor for adjusting to loss in a healthy way."

Grief usually moves through five stages:

- Denial or disbelief
- Anger or guilt
- Bargaining
- Depression or sadness
- Acceptance

Some of these stages can occur at the same time. Not all people who grieve experience all of these stages. Other symptoms of grief include sleep problems, appetite changes and difficulty getting back to work.

- With healthful grieving, one can:
- Resolve loss-related stress.
- Give meaning to the loss and to the place the relationship held for oneself.
- Begin looking toward the future.
- Start looking for others who might replace some of the lost aspects of the relationship.

Getting help

Some people do get stuck in the process, Dr. Goodkin says, and that's why grief-specific treatment can help.

According to Dr. Goodkin, people with the following symptoms of "complicated grief" may benefit from treatment:

- Persistent guilt feelings regarding actions taken or not taken at the time of death.
- A morbid preoccupation with self-worthlessness.
- A severe slowing down of one's thoughts and overall activity.
- Hallucinations, other than thinking one might be in connection with the deceased, or briefly hearing the voice of the deceased.

Grief can lead to depression or abuse of alcohol or drugs. Grief that lasts for more than two months and makes it difficult to deal with daily life may indicate a more serious problem.

Treatment options for unresolved grief include:

- Group psychotherapy sessions designed specifically for bereavement. Guided by a leader with grief expertise, these groups provide a non-threatening structure for talking about one's loss, expressing one's feelings, benefiting from the social support offered by the group, and learning to move on in healthful ways. "Many general mental health counselors will say they're capable of addressing death and dying issues," Dr. Goodkin says. "That can be true, but working with someone who has grief expertise can make a big difference in a person's long-term recovery."
- Individual psychotherapy. Private counseling can be helpful for people who are dealing with deeper emotional issues not related solely to the recently experienced loss. It is also recommended when privacy issues related to the circumstances of the loss would prevent the person from speaking up within a group.

Antidepressant or anti-anxiety medications. Drugs can often help when combined with psychotherapy. By improving mental health symptoms, medications can aid the person in moving through the grieving process more quickly.

Remember, if you or a household member are struggling with grief or loss, your employee assistance program is here for you. Resources include free and confidential counseling, wellness coaching, trainings, personal development tools, and more. **If you need additional information or to access services, please call MINES and Associates at 1-800-873-7138 today.** Also, [PersonalAdvantage](#) has a ton of great resources and [FREE webinars](#).

The Five Stages of Grief

The five stages of grief were first outlined by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a pioneer in the still-touchy field of dealing with death. The five stages are:

1. Denial: You cannot believe your loved one has really passed away.
2. Anger: You're mad, perhaps at everyone, perhaps even toward the deceased for having died.
3. Guilt: Perhaps over what was said or not said before your loved one passed away.
4. Bargaining: You think you should have died instead, or that if you're a better person in the future no one else will die.
5. Acceptance: While you still hurt, you find a balance in life.

According to the Norris Cotton Cancer Institute at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, as you experience the turmoil of all these emotions you may also:

- Lose your appetite
- Feel aches and pains
- Sleep too much or not enough
- Feel melancholy or hopeless
- Feel angry at yourself and your loved ones
- Feel guilty for things left unsaid and undone
- Feel unable to concentrate

These reactions are normal. They will dissipate as you come to terms with your grief. Things that may help:

- Solitude if you need time alone to experience your grief
- Time with friends and family
- Accepting help with paperwork, chores, etc
- Seeking spiritual support
- Getting adequate rest
- Sticking to routines
- Enjoying nature, such as walks outside or having some plants brought indoors
- Listening to music
- Creativity, such as writing, drawing, painting, handcrafts

If you or a member of your household needs assistance or guidance on any of these wellbeing topics, please call MINES & Associates, your EAP, today for free, confidential, 24/7 assistance at 800.873.7138.

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