



How does grief work?



The Grieving Process

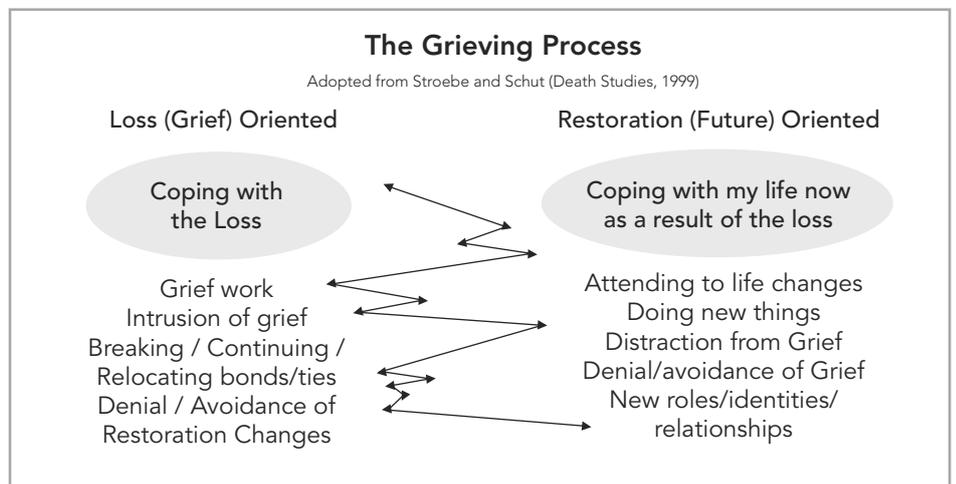
Some points about grief

1. **Death is an event**—grieving is a process
2. **Grief comes and goes** a bit like waves on a beach
3. **It normally takes two years** for a worker to come to terms with the major aspects of a loss
4. **Grieving involves moving over and back** between focussing on the loss and adjusting to life now without the person who died.
5. An employee who is grieving will have **good days and bad days.**
6. **Grief Bursts**—times when an employee's grief will be particularly intense—are normal

1. Grieving

Grieving is a process of adjustment. It takes time—often a lot longer than we might think. It comes and goes—sometimes we can feel that we are managing well and at other times we can be surprised by strong feelings of grief which seem to come out of nowhere (see **Grief Bursts** below). Although this can be painful and at times we will feel sad—it is important to remember that this is normal. When we are grieving there are two main areas that we have to cope with:

1. **The loss** that has happened (Loss Coping) - This involves all the painful feelings associated with the person who has died.
2. **My life now** as a result of the loss (Restoration Coping). This involves adjusting to the new reality of my life without this person.
 - We typically move over and back (oscillate) between both of these types of coping. This means that sometimes at work we will be very preoccupied with the person who has died and at other times we will be able to focus on adjusting to our life without the person.
 - Workers who are bereaved **need to be able to do both** types of coping in the workplace—i.e. sometimes focus on the loss and at other times focus on rebuilding their lives.



Bereavement is a journey, in and through which we need to come to terms with the loss to the point where we can re-evaluate our life and move forward.

David Charles-Edwards

2. Grief Bursts

A grief burst is a sudden feeling of being overwhelmed, a literal hit of grief. This sudden jolt of grief seems to come out of nowhere and strikes frightening deep pain at all levels. Even long after a death (or other loss), something as simple as a sound, smell, picture, movie or phrase can bring on a grief burst. Anniversaries, holidays, birthdays etc can trigger **Grief Bursts**

How to help

- Reassure the worker that Grief Bursts are normal and they will pass.
- Reassure the worker of your support
- Reassure the worker that it does not mean that they are not coping

Grieving is about adjusting to change in our lives





How does grief work?

Grieving is a normal process—it is not an illness

Tasks involved in grieving

Grieving is something that is done by a person rather than happen to him or her. There are a number of tasks which are involved in the process of grieving. These are:

1. **Accepting** the reality of the loss
2. **Experiencing** the pain or emotional aspects of the loss
3. **Adjusting** to an environment in which the deceased is missing
4. **Relocating** the dead person within one's life and finding ways to memorialise the person.
5. **Reassessing** and /or rebuilding faith or beliefs in the light of this loss

A person who is grieving does not do these tasks one after another but rather is continually moving back and forwards between them.



3. People grieve in different ways:

1. Some people like and need to talk about their grief with others and express their emotions openly. This is known as an intuitive grieving style and is common among many, though not all, women.
2. Others like and want to deal with their grief on their own—they channel their grief through activities such as physical exercise or creating a memorial for the person who died. This is known as an instrumental grieving style and is common among many, though not all, men.
3. Both grieving styles are appropriate—one is not better than the other.
4. If unsure about a bereaved workers grieving style, it can be helpful to check with them about how they would like to be supported.

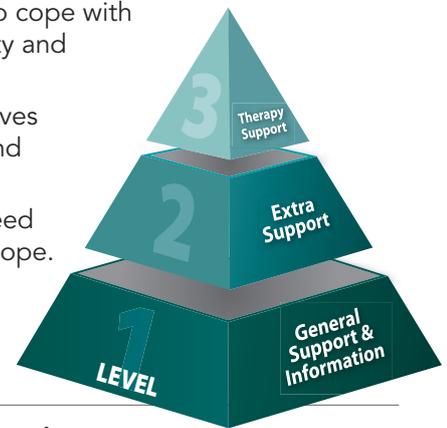
4. Most people don't need counselling to cope

Grief is a normal, though challenging part of life. Most people (about 66%) don't need counselling or therapy to cope with their grief. What they do need is sensitivity and understanding.

This is known as **Level 1 Support**: It involves providing practical help, social support and information on the grieving process.

Level 2 Support: This is where people need some extra support (usually listening) to cope.

Level 3 Support: Only a small number (5-10%) of grieving workers need counselling to cope with their grief



If you are concerned that a worker is not coping:

Get some advice from someone who knows about grief. For example:

- Irish Hospice Foundation (01 6793188) www.bereaved.ie
- Employee Assistance Professionals / Service
- Occupation Health

A workplace which understands how grief affects workers can play an important role in helping workers to cope

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