

Loss, Grief, and Recovery

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Brain References
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www.LLM.life



Human Experience

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Everyone experiences loss—it is part of being human and creates sadness

Unfortunately it is often defined rather narrowly and applied primarily to the death of a family member, friend, or pet—it is more than that

Loss has mental, emotional physical, cognitive, behavioral, social, and philosophical dimensions—and it requires grieving and recovery in order to live life to its fullness on this planet

Loss—What Is It?

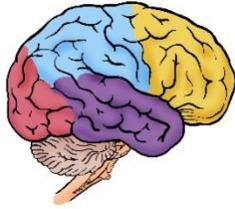
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The state of being deprived of something that you once had or thought you had or greatly desired

- **Physical – something the person can touch or measure**
- **Abstract – related to aspects of a person's social or daily interactions**



Sometimes the loss can be repaired, sometimes it cannot—in order for the brain to deal with loss effectively, you need to be able to identify, label, and describe it



Loss Examples

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- **A sense of not meeting expectations**
- **Major change in a familiar state of affairs (as in displacement due to a natural disaster)**
- **Loss of a body part, chronic illness or disease**
- **Failing sensory perception (eyes, ears, nose)**
- **A hoped-for event that does not materialize**
- **Diminished perceived options**
- **Being laid off or fired, bankruptcy**
- **Cannot get pregnant, miscarriage, fetal demise**
- **‘Left at the altar,’ divorce, abusive situation**
- **Death . . .**

Loss Is Cumulative

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Loss may loom large as in the death of a family member, close friend, or pet; often it involves daily small losses that may go unrecognized

Bad news: Losses that have not been identified, labeled, and grieved effectively can form a slush-fund of unresolved emotional pain that can trigger an over-reaction to a small subsequent loss

Good news: You can learn to move through the recovery process successfully

Create a 'Loss Line'

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Helps you picture your losses over your lifetime, some may be prior to your birth

Write **date** and the **loss** in the middle → of the page

✓ Below note the **negative** results

✓ Above note **positive** outcomes

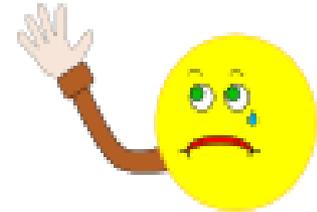
Did you grieve the loss effectively and, if so, what is your level of recovery?

Grief

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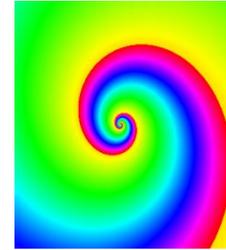
Grief can be defined as intense suffering due to:

- **Loss of any type**
- **Mental, emotional, or physical injury**
- **Misfortune or evil of any type**
- **Conflicting feelings experienced following an event that the brain perceives has a negative impact on your life**



Grief Response Options

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Some 'rush to replace' the loss trying to 'fill the void' and minimize discomfort

Some create unnecessary drama and messes to clean up that could have been avoided

Some 'stuff it,' which prevents grieving and recovery and stops emotional growth

Some develop addictive behaviors in an attempt to stifle the pain and feel better

Some kill themselves because their brains are in an altered state

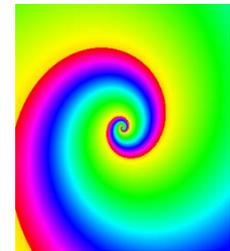
Grief Response Options, Cont'd

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Some get stuck in sadness or anger, which can become a habit, turn into chronic depression and bitterness, and shorten one's life

Some help each other move through grief recovery

Some look for the gift in the loss and use the experience to learn and grow



Some use the experience to help others

Some create something to honor the memory of the person or event in a positive way (MADD)

Challenges

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Society has taught its members how to acquire but not lose, emphasizing *instant everything*—and recovery take time



Many learned unhelpful coping styles in childhood due to inadequate role modeling—need to develop healthier responses

Many lack skills for dealing with loss-related stress effectively—need to develop effective strategies

Many have low EQ—need to raise their EQ level

Many have little faith and trust—learned skills

Recovery

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The process of learning to *feel better* following a loss

Recovery allows you to recall the loss without experiencing the terrible sting of grief and to return to or achieve a state of soundness and balance

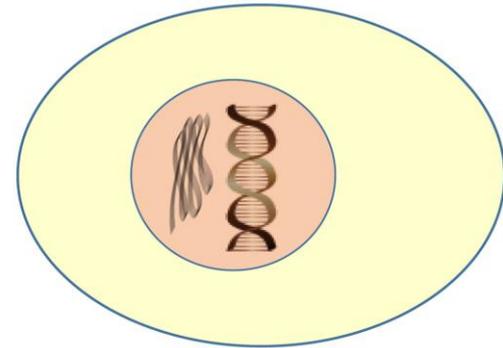
Recovery helps you deal more effectively with subsequent losses and role model those strategies to other

Epigenetics and Cellular Memory

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Once two systems come in energetic contact, they are connected forever by the infinite cellular memory of their connection

Our experiences with parents, siblings, children, and others close to us remain within us



Cellular memory is a form of energy — as with matter, energy is not destroyed so information stored at the cellular level is retained indefinitely.

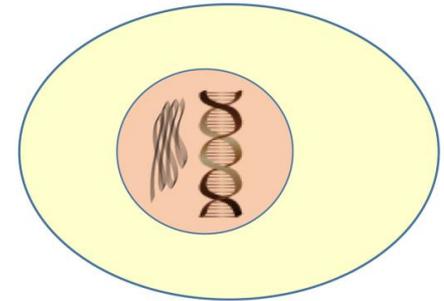
—Paul Pearsall PhD

Absence or Presence

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When a loved one dies, survivors (even when they struggle with survivor guilt) often tend to think of that person primarily in terms of absence

True, the person is no longer tangibly present, yet you carry them with you as long as you live in the cell nucleus



Memories are housed on protein strands in every cell that has a nucleus, and their facial memory may be housed in a single cell

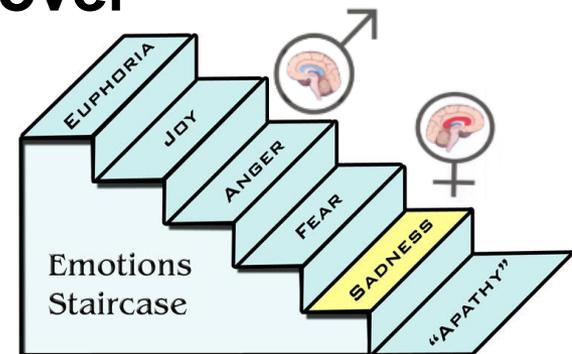
(Jennifer Aniston phenomenon)

Gender Differences

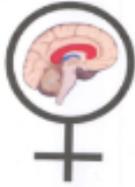
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Sadness is the emotion that signals a loss and it provides energy to grieve and recover

- ✓ **Males tend to stop at anger stay stuck there**
- ✓ **Females tend to go to sadness and stay stuck there**

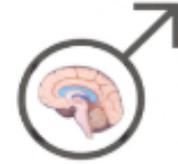


This can cause a disconnect in a relationship – couples often break up after a severe loss



Gender Differences

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Are more likely to have a social network of female friends with whom they can talk about what happened and get it outside of the brain in front of them—savvy and nurturing female friends can be a great help

Are less likely to already have a social network of male friends in place, trusted individuals with whom they can spend time, which can help discharge some of the emotional pain



Differences, Cont'd

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Tend to exhibit more of an experience-oriented style of grieving; want to rehearse the loss

May over-process—re-experience the pain—and believe that *talking* about it is enough and that no action is required

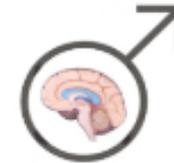
Tend to exhibit a goal-oriented grieving style; want to take action; may fail to articulate the loss, grieve, and recover

Are more likely to act out their grief (crash the car, get drunk, kick the cat, engage in high-risk behaviors, have an affair)



Differences, Cont'd

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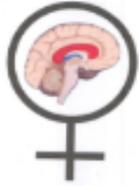


Tend to be more comfortable articulating their loss and grief, verbalizing it to friends and family

Have often been socialized to express grief through tears (some have learned to 'get attention' through them)

Tend to be less comfortable verbalizing their grief, and would rather *fix* the loss rather than discuss it

When the loss cannot be fixed, may become depressed but exhibit depression as anger, isolation, and irritability



Risks

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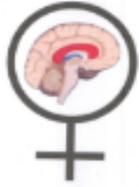


May get in the habit of brooding / ruminating endlessly and fail to take constructive action that could help them to cope more effectively

May grieve endlessly, blame themselves, and never recover

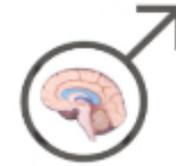
May develop a slush-fund of unresolved loss and grief that may explode later on when another loss (however small) occurs

May blame others, make unfortunate choices, and never recover



Risks, Cont'd

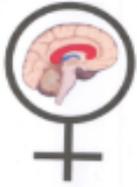
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May get stuck in a cycle of rehearsal, ignoring relationships that remain and failing to move on with life

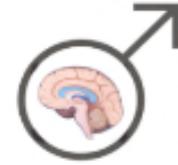
May focus on the needs of others to the exclusion of taking good care of themselves during recovery

May try to distance himself from reminders of his inability to 'fix' the loss or escape from the emotional pain of loss through excessive time spent at work or on other activities (e.g., television, computer games, movies, sports, sex, food, drugs, sleep)



Goals

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**Take constructive action
whether or not they feel
like it at the moment**

**Avoid perpetual brooding
and endlessly rehearsing,
ignoring friends and
family, and exhibiting
behaviors that have
negative outcomes**

**Learn to communicate
verbally and act out
emotions in ways that
have positive outcomes**

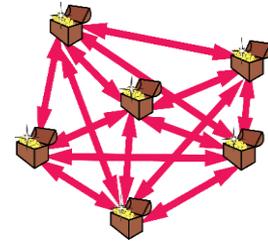
**Learn to identify loss
and choose to engage
in the grief recovery
process, as emotional
pain is unlikely to
resolve on its own**

Recovery Models

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The Kubler-Ross model has been landmark in helping individuals prepare for their own death process and dying with dignity

There can be a vast difference between the grieving process that is useful in preparation for one's own death and the recovery process that is effective for survivors



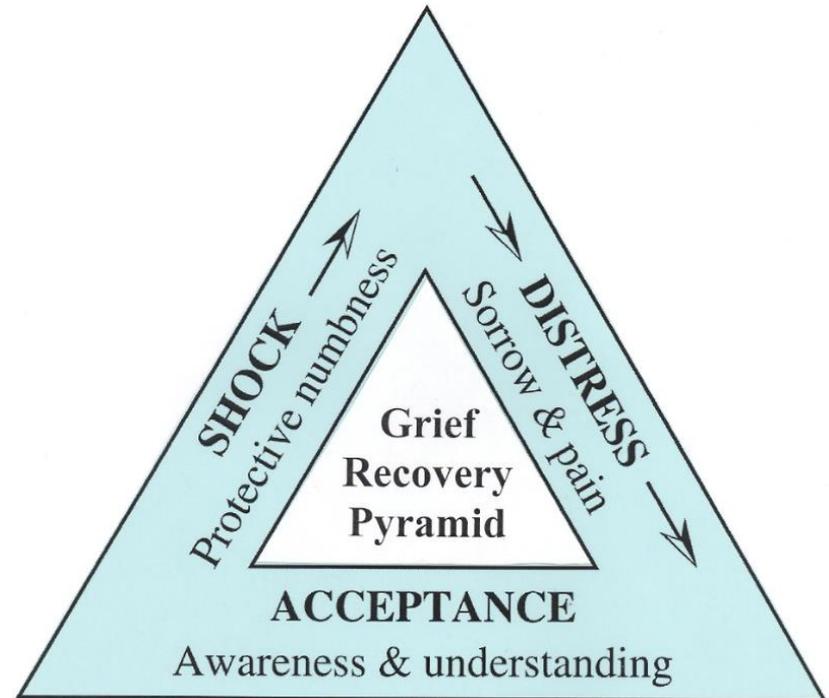
The Grief Recovery Pyramid is a model to help *survivors*—you may move back and forth or around the pyramid stages several times

Grief Recovery Resources

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Every brain is unique so **loss, grief, and recovery** are unique as well—there are commonalities

- Article: *Grief Recovery Pyramid*
- Mini-monograph *Loss, Grief, and Recovery*



The Big Picture

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Our plans are not always God's plans. He may see that it is best for us and for His cause to refuse our very best intentions.....in the future life the mysteries that here have annoyed and disappointed us will be made plain. We shall see that our seemingly unanswered prayers and disappointed hopes have been among our greatest blessings

—Ellen G. White MH 473

Scriptural Admonition

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Grief not as do those who have no hope

—1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Trust in the Lord always ... lean not to your own
understanding**

—Proverbs 3:5-6

Be anxious for nothing ... think on these things

—Philippians 4:6-8

Give thanks in all circumstances

—1 Thessalonians 5:18