

News Release

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Lose Something

Tampa, Florida (June, 2011). So often when we think of the word grief, we associate it with the word death. Certainly when a spouse, family member or friend dies, we go through a grief process. It is important, however, to expand our understanding of what grief really is and to what the word applies. Grief is an emotion that consists of many parts and applies to any kind of loss. Many grieve the loss of a pet, for example. But there are many, many types of losses: the loss of a relationship, the loss of a job, the loss of neighbors when a move takes place. We even grieve positive things: we get promoted but grieve the loss of what we used to do. What is grief?

The famous Elizabeth Kubler-Ross taught that there are five stages:

- **Shock, disbelief or denial**
- **Anger**
- **Bargaining**
- **Depression**
- **Acceptance**

Based on our own experiences with loss, what we have been taught about loss, what we have seen “modeled” for us when significant others experienced loss, and our degree of closeness to the person, situation, or event determines the intensity and length of time for the grieving process we will experience. Imagine the process not as a linear model where you go from stage one to stage two to stage three etc. Rather imagine it as a circle. The closer you are to the loss and the greater the impact on you, the bigger the circle. Now imagine that as you go from the first stage to the next any event, memory or anniversary can throw you right back to the first stage. Yes, that is how it goes:

a constant back and forth as some event brings about a memory of a certain day or experience and you find yourself saying “I can’t believe x isn’t here!”

Usually if someone is very close to the loss it takes on average a full year to go through all the stages and come to a point of acceptance. Is that the end of it? No. The next year one will still grieve but the circle will be a little smaller. Memorial Day, that was just celebrated, is a reminder of how individuals still grieve many, many years later.

Another issue to be considered is that we all grieve differently. Some become very emotional while others withdraw and become quiet. Some feel as if they are on a roller coaster ride of emotions while others feel like a cork that gets pushed under the water but is able to bob back up to the surface and go with the flow of the water for a while.

What can you do if you or someone you know has experienced a loss or multiple losses? What can you do if don’t even know where to begin? Just call your EAP and you will be directed to our experienced team of counselors. It is that simple. We will help you cope, find assistance, and guide you down the path to effectively dealing with whatever might be impacting your life. Help is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.