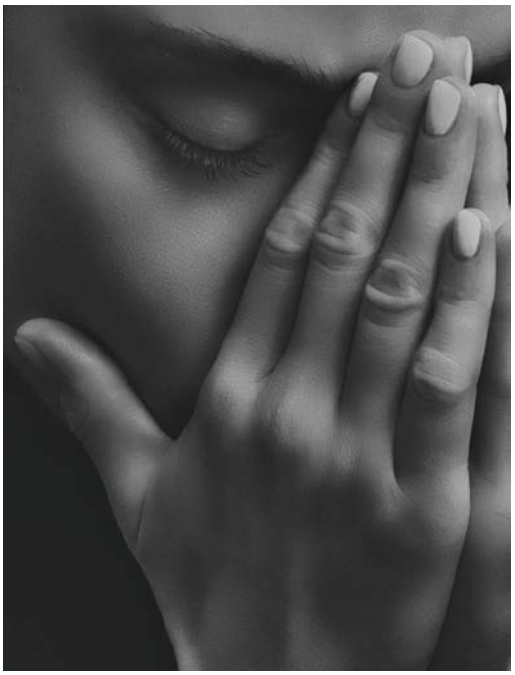
GRIEF AND TRAUMA RESPONSES

WHAT IS GRIEF?



Grief is the normal response of sorrow, heartache, and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. Grief can also be a common human response after a disaster or other traumatic event. Grief is not a state but a process.

Each person is unique and therefore each person's response to grief and trauma are unique.

For most of us, the body interprets grief as an intense form of stress and switches on the fight-flight-freeze responses.

Being able to address people's common reactions from a more "scientific" point of view is often helpful to them. In life, there are thee universal emotional responses which include anger, guilt, and grief.

You may feel empty or numb, or unable to feel joy or sadness. You may also feel angry. You may experience physical reactions, including the following:

- Trembling
- Muscle weakness
- Nausea and trouble eating
- Trouble sleeping or difficulty breathing
- Dry Mouth

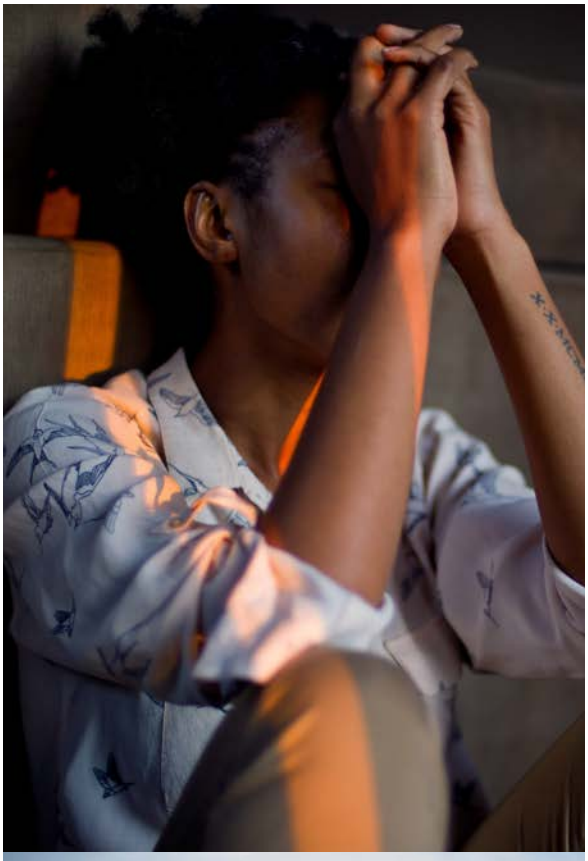
Eventually, you may also notice positive changes in yourself from your experience of loss, such as the following:

- Becoming more understanding and tolerant
- Having increased appreciation for relationships and loved ones
- Feeling grateful for the presence of those in your community who are loving and caring
- Experiencing enhanced spiritual connection
- Becoming more socially active
- Getting involved in advocacy to help people who have experienced similar losses

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GRIEF AND TRAUMA RESPONSES

STAGES OF GRIEF/LOSS



SHOCK/DENIAL

The initial reaction--the psychological process we use to protect ourselves from becoming overwhelmed. This can be experienced as:

- Numbness or does not sink in
- This can't be happening
- Denying - Ignoring - Minimizing

ANGER/ANXIETY

Focus is on the personal impact, the unfairness

- Personal distress level rise--looking for someone or something to blame
- "Displaced" anger at others involved
- Rebelliousness

SADNESS/DEPRESSION

Focus is on the sadness, helplessness

- Lack of appetite
- Difficulty and/or change in sleeping routine
- Not enjoying things you did in the past
- Withdrawal



EXPLORATION/ACCEPTANCE

Attention shifts to a future-focus, drawing on internal energy to focus on the future.

These are all healthy to some extent, but when a person gets stuck in a stage, this eventually impedes the natural healing process.

POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO GRIEF OR A TRAUMATIC EVENT

After a loss or a traumatic event, the body and mind are impacted in various ways. Typical symptoms manifest in four areas: emotional disruption, physical reactions, behavioral changes, and cognitive function. Again, they are unique to each individual, but below are some of the most common reactions.

YOU MAY FEEL EMOTIONALLY:

- Anxious or fearful
- Overwhelmed by sadness
- Angry, especially if the event involved violence
- Guilty, even when you have no control over the event.
- Heroic, like you can do anything
- Like you have too much energy or no energy at all
- Disconnected, not caring about anything or anyone
- Numb, unable to feel either joy or sadness
- Hopelessness, sadness, or depression
- Feeling isolated
- Shock or disbelief
- Withdrawn
- Tearfulness
- Feeling overwhelmed



YOU MAY HAVE PHYSICAL REACTIONS SUCH AS:

- Having stomachaches or diarrhea
- Having headaches or other physical pains for no clear reason
- Eating too much or too little
- Sweating or having chills
- Getting tremors (shaking) or muscle twitching
- Being jumpy or easily startled
- Rapid heart rate and blood pressure
- Numbness or tingling
- Fatigue



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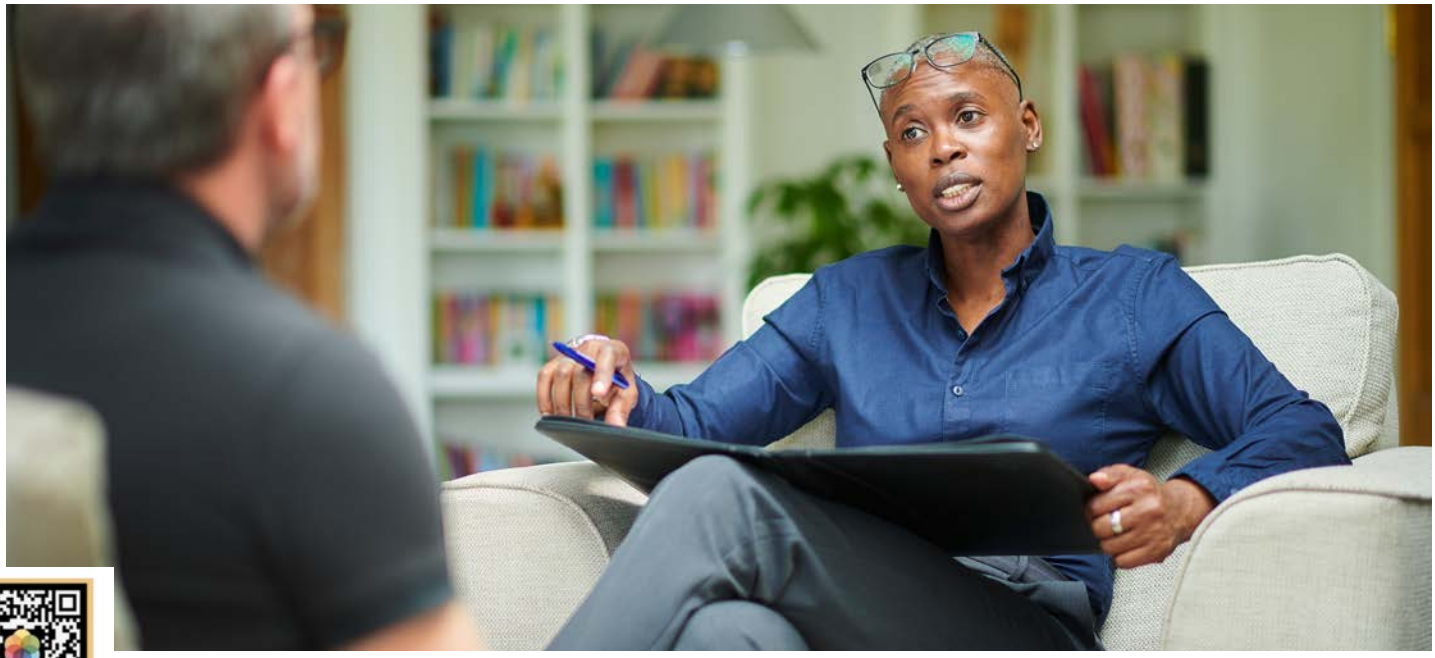
POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO GRIEF OR A TRAUMATIC EVENT

YOU MAY HAVE BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS SUCH AS:

- Having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, sleeping too much, or trouble relaxing
- Noticing an increase or decrease in your energy and activity levels
- Feeling sad or crying frequently
- Using alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs or even prescription medication in an attempt to reduce distressing feelings or to forget
- Having outbursts of anger, feeling really irritated and blaming other people for everything
- Having difficulty accepting help or helping others
- Wanting to be alone most of the time and isolating yourself
- Anxious, or nervous behaviors such as fidgeting, teeth grinding, pacing, nail biting
- Hyper-vigilance and restlessness
- Workplace sabotage
- Avoidance
- Threat of violence

YOU MAY EXPERIENCE PROBLEMS IN YOUR THINKING SUCH AS:

- Having difficultly remembering things
- Having trouble thinking clearly and concentrating
- Feeling confused
- Worrying a lot
- Having difficulty making decisions
- Having difficulty talking about what happened or listening to others
- Poor judgement
- Difficulty with usual tasks and multitasking
- Intrusive recollections or thoughts
- Distressing dreams
- Fear of repetition
- Slowed thinking
- Disorientation
- Calculation difficulty, problem solving challenges



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POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO GRIEF OR A TRAUMATIC EVENT

After a disaster or other traumatic event, many factors can disrupt the normal process of grieving, raising the risk for complicated or traumatic grief.

SYMPTOMS OF COMPLICATED OR TRAUMATIC GRIEF:

- Feeling deeply angry about the death or loss
- Being unable to think about anything but your loved one
- Not wanting any reminders of your loved one at all
- Having nightmares or intrusive thoughts
- Feeling deep loneliness and longing for the person you lost
- Feeling distrustful of others
- Feeling unable to maintain regular activities or fulfill responsibilities
- Feeling bitterness about life and envying others not affected by grief
- Being unable to enjoy life or remember happy times with your loved one.



SIGNS SURVIVORS NEED MORE HELP

Some of the more serious signs of stress include the following:

- Disorientation or confusion and difficulty communicating thoughts
- Inability to see or hear properly
- Limited attention span and difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of becoming easily frustrated
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Frequent mood swings or continuous crying
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Reluctance to leave home
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone
- Increased use of illegal drugs, alcohol, or prescription medication
- Worsening of existing medical problems.



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HELPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

WHAT HELPS?

Everyone has different ways of coping, but there are some steps to recovery from a disaster or traumatic event that are known to help many people.

- **Talk to Someone.** Connecting with and talking to others who accept and understand your feelings is the best way to help yourself. Reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or faith leader and talk abut how you are doing.
- **Move your body.** It is the next best way to relieve stress. Try deep breathing, gentle stretching, and walking. These are the simplest exercises that can help.
- **Meditate** and listen to music timed to your breathing. These are effective ways to calm yourself.
- **Promote physical care** by eating healthy meals and snacks, getting enough rest, and drinking plenty of water. Model these behaviors for your family.



- **Reestablish routines.** Get back to doing the things you would normally do every day. This can help you regain a sense of control over your life and reduce anxiety.
- **Know that it's okay to celebrate success** in the recovery process and have moments of joy even after a trauma. Return to doing things you enjoy as a family and spending time with friends.
- **Try not to let thoughts about the disaster or trauma take over your thinking.** If you have difficulty making sense of the trauma or are questioning why this event happened, seek out a mental health professional or, if you prefer, speak with a trusted faith-based or spiritual leader.

TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP, CONTACT YOUR EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP). WAP, INC. CLIENTS SHOULD CALL 1-800-343-3822 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT WITH A COUNSELOR FOR SHORT-TERM ASSISTANCE OR REFERRAL TO A LONGER-TERM RESOURCE.



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HELPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

HELPING THOSE YOU CARE ABOUT

Give this to your loved one/friend so they can know what things they can do to help you with the trauma you have gone through.

1. Spend time with the individual.
2. Encourage the individual to talk about the feelings and let them know you care.
3. Do not say, “I know how you feel”. Instead, say that you are sorry for their pain or loss.
4. Don’t assume that men cope with trauma better than women.
5. Offer assistance whether or not they have asked for help.
6. Don’t tell the individual that everything will be okay. Let them know you will be there and offer your support through listening.
7. Don’t try to find explanations for what happened.
8. Offer to accompany the individual to any events associated with the trauma (court hearings, funerals, etc.).
9. Help with everyday tasks, like cleaning, cooking, caring for the family, etc.
10. Allow the individual some private time.
11. Try not to take his/her anger or other feelings personally.
12. Sometimes you don’t have to say anything. Just being there is enough.







HELPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS

PRINCIPLES OF RESILIENCY

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from difficult times in life. Resilience doesn't make the hurt go away and doesn't solve all problems - it just helps you cope, adjust and stay on your feet. Her are a few principles of resiliency:

1. Human beings are genetically designed to learn from stressful situations. Resiliency is a basic survival mechanism for the human race.
2. We can transform our approach to stress by our self talk
3. We have an innate coping power to deal with our stressful events. Victim - Survivor - Thriver
4. We have personal/spiritual strengths to guide us.
5. Our social groups help us tap into our coping power: work, natural, family, or spiritual groups.
6. We can grow past mere resilience
7. Our nervous system provides us with excellent feedback, if we pay attention to it.





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ACTION PLAN

1. ACTIVITIES TO HELP MY RECOVERY

2. TO TAKE CARE OF MYSELF I WILL...

TODAY:	TOMORROW:	NEXT WEEK:

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