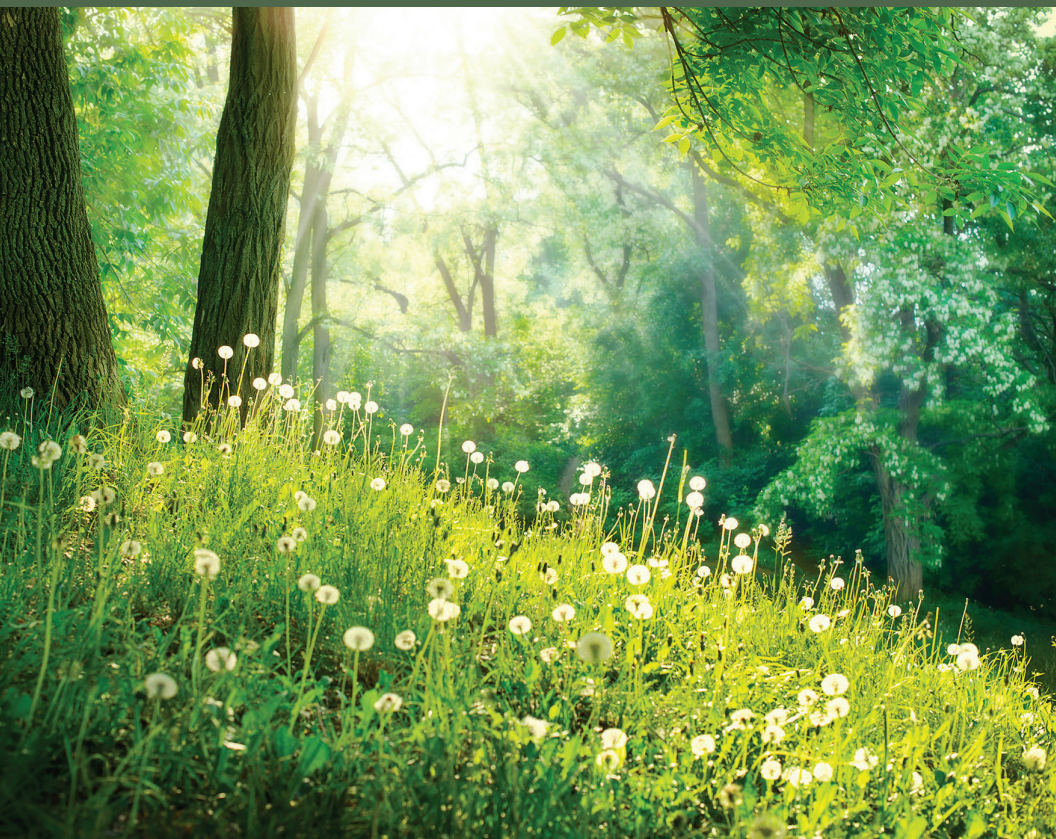


Grieving Your
LOVED ONE

Jason Troyer, PhD



This booklet provides you with practical strategies for healing after the loss of a loved one. It also answers some of the most common questions about grief. I hope it helps you as you mourn the death of your loved one.

Sincerely,
Jason Troyer PhD



In the first weeks after the death of a loved one, it is normal to have many questions such as:

- ❖ Is my grief normal?
- ❖ How long will my grief last?
- ❖ How can I help myself and others?
- ❖ Where can I find more help?

In this booklet, I provide answers to these questions, but even more resources are available at the website listed on the back cover.



Is My Grief Normal?

There are a wide variety of normal emotions and reactions following the loss of a loved one. Your reactions will be influenced by a wide variety of factors including the type of relationship (e.g., spouse, child, parent, etc.), the circumstances of their death, the closeness of your relationship, your previous losses, and many other factors.

Here are several common reactions to loss:

- Anger
- Confusion
- Relief
- Guilt
- Shock
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Sadness
- Disbelief
- Hopelessness
- Shame
- Avoidance
- Helplessness
- Dreams/Nightmares
- Disorientation
- Obsessive Thinking

You may also experience some of the following physical reactions:

- Aches & Pain
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Loss of Appetite
- Insomnia
- Tenseness

Although these are common and normal reactions, if you experience significant physical or emotional distress, it is important to seek help from a mental health or medical professional.

How Long Will My Grief Last?

Unfortunately, our culture suggests that grief is something you “get over” in a matter of a few days or weeks. This is not realistic. Most grieving people find their grief lessens after several months or a year, but may also feel that a part of them is always grieving the loss of their loved one.

Grief Bursts

Your grief will not necessarily improve each day. It is common and normal to experience ‘grief bursts’ – which are moments or days when your grief is especially painful. These bursts of grief may be due to significant days (e.g., your loved one’s birthday, wedding anniversaries, holidays, etc.). Grief bursts may also be due to random reminders of your loved one – like hearing a familiar song, driving past a key location, or seeing someone who reminds you of your loved one. Grief bursts are painful, but they are a normal part of grieving. Experiencing grief bursts does not mean that you are regressing or grieving incorrectly.

The Stages of Grief

A common question about the process and length of grief relates to Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s ‘Stages of Grief’ (which include: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). You may have heard about the stages of grief on a television show or in a book. Given their popularity, you might assume the stages of grief are the “right” way to grieve – but this is incorrect. Many people experience some of the reactions, but there is no evidence that everyone must go through all the reactions, nor should they happen in a specific order. Research and personal experience show us that grief reactions are very individualized. So don’t be worried if your grief process does not follow the stages of grief.

How Can I Help Myself?

One of the most common questions I get is “How can I help myself with my grief?” Although grief is not something you can “solve” or “fix,” there are several ways you can help yourself.

Be Gentle & Patient with Yourself

There are no prizes for trying to rush through your grief. In fact, you will often cause more problems if you try to hurry through your grief. Grant yourself the time to experience your grief.

Be Open to Opportunities

Many grieving people are hesitant to be a “third wheel” and turn down opportunities to socialize with others. I would encourage you to accept offers to socialize with others, if you feel like doing so.

It's OK to Say “No”

While you may enjoy socializing with others, it can also be helpful to cut back on your normal activities for a while. It is reasonable to cut back on some of your usual responsibilities and simply focus on taking care of yourself.

Share Your Thoughts & Feelings

Setting aside time when you feel comfortable talking with others can be very helpful. This may involve talking with a trusted friend or family member, a clergy person, or a therapist. You may prefer to write down your thoughts and feelings in a personal journal or diary.

Take Care of Your Physical Health

Be sure to eat a balanced diet, engage in exercise, avoid excessive alcohol use, and take care of your physical health. It is common to feel anxious and tired, yet also have trouble sleeping. Exercise and eating well can help with these concerns.

Express Yourself

It can be helpful to express yourself through creative hobbies or activities. For example, you may use sewing, quilting, wood-working, painting, writing poetry, singing, writing stories, or playing an instrument as a way to express your feelings. Creating a photo album or video of your loved one can also be a way to express yourself and remember your loved one.

Engage in Meaningful Rituals & Activities

You may find it helpful to create meaningful habits and activities. These actions may be large or small, public or private. For example, you may find comfort in going to the cemetery or another special place to remember your loved one. You might decide to donate money in your loved one's name or volunteer for a meaningful cause.



General Reminders

- ❖ Grief is overwhelming. But following a few general principles can help make your grieving process a little easier. Below are several key reminders for you as you begin your journey of grief.
- ❖ There are many healthy ways to express grief (including feelings, actions, and thoughts) and all forms should be acknowledged and respected.
- ❖ Most responses to a loved one's death are painful, yet normal.
- ❖ Many friends, family members, and co-workers don't know how to be helpful or provide comfort to those who have lost a loved one. You may find that other grieving people are the only ones who really understand.
- ❖ A sense of feeling connected to your loved one is often healthy and normal; there is no need to "cut ties" or try to forget them.
- ❖ Most people can adjust to the loss of a loved one with the assistance of friends and family, but some may benefit from professional assistance.



Need More Help?

Visit www.GriefPlan.com for helpful videos and articles to help you heal, remember, and rebuild after loss. These resources cover topics such as:

- ❖ Helping children as they grieve
- ❖ Healing after the loss of a spouse, parent, child, and other loved ones
- ❖ Dealing with traumatic losses due to suicide, overdose, and accidents
- ❖ Recognizing signs that you may need professional help
- ❖ A step-by-step video program to help you through your grief

About the Author

Dr. Jason Troyer earned his master's degree in counseling and his doctorate in counseling psychology. He is a published author, grief researcher, and former college professor and therapist.

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