



## Dealing with Loss

The grief of loss is normal and almost everyone experiences this very human emotion. Dealing with loss can be one of the more difficult adjustments we make in our entire life. This is especially true when the loss involves a close loved one. Losses in life are common and even those that do not involve death can take a toll on our emotions. The way we respond to loss is usually not predictable and the emotions that come to the surface can be difficult to control.

In order to help people deal with loss, we will cover the following topics:

- Types of Loss
- Understanding the Hurt
- Suggestions for Finding Hope and Healing
- How and Where to get Help When the Hurt is Severe

### **TYPES OF LOSS**

#### What is Loss?

**DEFINITION**      **loss** \ 'los \ *noun*

1: the fact or process of losing someone or something

2: the state or feeling of grief when deprived of someone or something of value

A definition may help to understand the meaning of the word but a definition doesn't help much in dealing with loss.

#### Many Forms of Loss

Losses come in many forms and from many sources. Every loss is personal and as different and unique as a snowflake.

Because of this:

- It is often difficult for others to understand our loss.
- It is generally not helpful to compare our loss to the loss of others.
- As a rule, losses are not quantifiable, nor do they lend themselves to analysis.
- Dealing with loss may also be distinctly different for each individual.

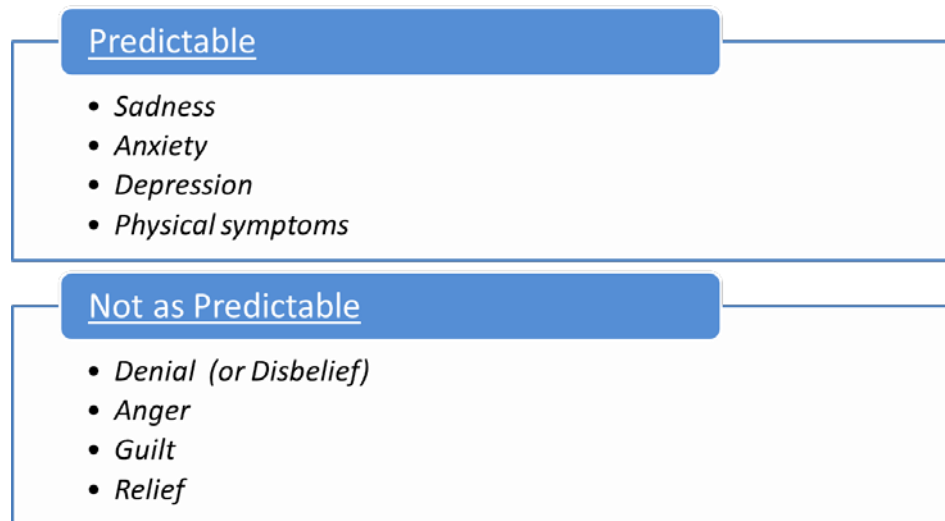
Losses that bring on emotional trauma and upheaval will generally fall into one of the following identifiable categories:

- Loss of a loved one
- Loss of companionship
- Loss of safety or security
- Loss of some aspect of personal identity

Individual loss may overlap more than one category and the pain and hurt is often greater when the loss includes more than one dimension.

## UNDERSTANDING THE HURT

The pain of those who experience loss can range from light or moderate to severe and often includes the following symptoms:



Here are two important observations about the hurts that come from loss

- The pain can often be long lasting and difficult to overcome
- The degree of pain is generally relative to the significance or importance of that which is lost

## ENCOURAGING HOPE AND HEALING

Here are some ways that may be effective in helping people deal with the pain and hurt of loss.

### Acknowledge Your Pain

- Recognize that avoiding painful thoughts or discussions may not be the best course of action in moving beyond the hurt.
- Avoiding the pain may actually prolong recovery.
- Sometimes the most helpful part of this step is to find someone to talk to – someone who will really listen.

### Express Your Feelings

- Keeping things in is usually not helpful.
- It is important to admit to yourself and to others what they are going through.
- Encourage and help that one to say how they feel and not to be concerned whether others will think it not right or inappropriate. Those feelings are valid and important.

### Take Care of Yourself

- Be alert for the physical symptoms that may result such as eating problems, sleep loss and even health issues.
- Get plenty of rest and sleep.
- And remember that exercise can work wonders for the spirit and the mind as well as the body.

### Connect with Others

- Avoid the temptation to withdraw and be alone.
- Old friends, especially those who shared your pre-loss life, can often help but may require a renewing of those friendships.
- Be willing to embrace new associations and relationships. Look for others that you might also reach out to.

### When You Are Ready, Let Go

- This step is the hardest to take and only that person will know when it is the right time.
- The time for release and “letting go” often comes suddenly and unexpectedly but when it does, be willing to consciously turn the corner.

## Draw on the Resources of Faith

- As a faith-based organization we personally know the great significance of faith.
- It is because of the tremendous value of faith that we often encourage those who have experienced serious loss to explore this important resource through such things as worship, prayer, and personal study.

May we also be guided by the wisdom of others:

*Cicero* - “Friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief.”

*William Shakespeare* - “Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers in the overwrought heart and bids it break.”

*Helen Steiner Rice* “Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.”

*Psalm 30 verse 5* “...Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning”

## **WHERE TO TURN FOR ADDITIONAL HELP**

Here are other ways to find support and guidance:

**Inspirational materials** can often help.

**Your chaplain** can be a source of encouragement and has access to helpful booklets related to loss or grief.

Many churches and organizations offer **support groups** for those who are dealing with the grief that comes from loss.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** When the pain from loss is severe and won't go away, it is important to seek specially trained help.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our final thought focuses on the personal growth that comes from effectively dealing with loss. Walking through the hurt and pain of serious loss doesn't insulate a person from future hurt but it can make that person stronger. And it can also equip the person to reach out and really help others who go through losses of the same or even different kinds of loss.