

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Coping with Grief and Loss

Whatever type of loss you've suffered, there's no tailored way to grieve. But by understanding that grieving is not a sign of weakness, you can find healthier ways to cope. Grief is defined as a healthy and natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. Often, the pain of loss can be devastating. You may experience all kinds of unexpected emotions from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt and profound sadness. The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical wellbeing, such as causing sleep or eating disorders, or even ability to think straight. The above reactions will differ depending on the loss you are encountering, hence the more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be.

Employers are expected to ensure that employees are fully supported during this phase especially after having lost a loved one to continue thriving at the workplace. The Government Institutions Pension Fund (GIPF) as an employer of choice ensures that employees are provided with the necessary emotional, financial assistance as well as wreaths during the bereavement period as a sign of good gesture to our employees.

Picking yourself up after the loss of someone or something you love feels like an emotional roller coaster. Grieving the death of a loved one is often perceived as one of the most excruciating types of grief, but any loss can cause grief, and this includes divorce or relationship breakups, loss of financial stability, deteriorating health, a job and friendships to mention a few. The best way to deal with a loss is to acknowledge it and face it head on and if you are experiencing difficulties with coping, seek support immediately to ease emotional hurdle.

Even subtle losses in life can trigger a sense of grief. For example, you might grieve after moving away from home, graduating from the University, or even changing jobs. Whatever your loss, it's personal to you, so don't feel ashamed about how you feel, or believe that it's somehow only appropriate to grieve for certain things. If the person, animal, relationship, or situation was significant to you, it's normal to grieve the loss you're experiencing.

Whether your grief is caused by losing a parent, child, spouse/partner, close friend, or any other relative, you will encounter the same grief. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith and how substantial the loss was to you. It's worth acknowledging that after such a significant loss, life may never seem quite the same again. But they say time heals and you should trust the process to bounce back. In no time, your sorrow will start to look to the future and eventually help you to come to terms with your loss.

Inevitably, the grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried and there is no "normal" schedule for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months, whereas, for others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experiences, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to take its natural path.

The five various stages of grief are denial, where you believe "this can't be happening to me", anger "why is this happening? who is to blame?", bargaining "make this not to happen", depression "I am too sad to do anything.", and acceptance "I'm at peace with what happened."

If you are experiencing any of these emotions following a loss, it may help to know that your reaction is natural and that you will heal in time. However, not everyone who grieves goes through all these stages and that's okay. Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to go through each stage to heal. In fact, some people navigate their grief without going through any of these stages.

And if you go through these stages of grief, you probably won't experience them in a neat, sequential order, so don't worry about what you "should" be feeling or which stage you're

supposed to be in. We grieve as individual and not as a collective and this clearly proves that there is no one size fits all grieving pattern.

Symptoms of Grief

While loss affects people in different ways, many of us encounter feelings like you're going crazy, like you're experiencing a nightmare, or questioning your religious or spiritual beliefs.

Emotional Symptoms of Grief

Profound Sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, hopelessness, or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.

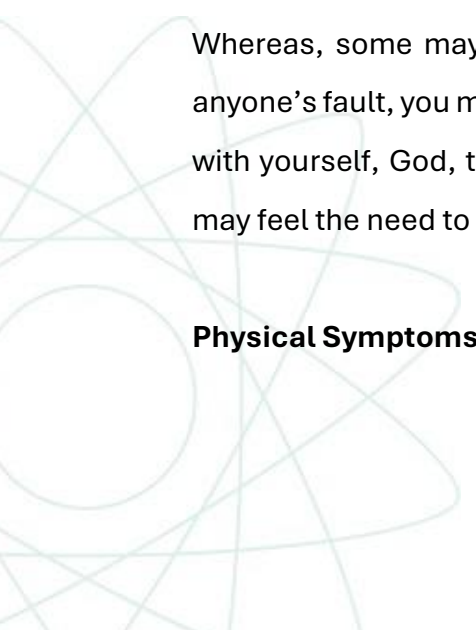
Some individuals may feel a sense of guilt, where they may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do for the person. You may feel powerless to prevent your loss, even if it was completely beyond your control.

Accepting what happened can be daunting. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or be in denial. If someone you love has died, for example, you may keep expecting them to show up anytime, even though you know they're gone.

Fear is another emotion which can trigger a host of worries. If you've lost your partner, your job, or your home, for example, you may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure about the future. You may even have panic attacks or worse fears can trigger your own mortality, when you are trying to uncover possible ways to navigate the dark cloud.

Whereas, some may feel anger, in instances even when the loss was not due to the anyone's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry with yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you. You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice that was done to you.

Physical Symptoms of Grief



We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief can cause physical challenges, aches and pains, insomnia, fatigue, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain which is very risky to one's health.

Taking Care of Yourself as You Grieve

While loss is an inevitable part of life, there are ways to help come to terms with your grief and eventually, find a way to pick up the pieces and move on with your life. When you're grieving, it's more important to prioritize your emotional and physical health first. The stress of a major loss can quickly deplete your energy and emotional reserves. Looking after your physical and emotional needs will help you navigate this difficult time.

When grieving, do not suppress your feelings but it's crucial to release the emotions, this means crying, if you must. If need be, seek professional help, or embrace the support of others. Unresolved grief can lead to health complications such as depression, anxiety, etc. When grieving, don't resort to alcohol or drugs to numb the pain of grief. This substance can only lift your mood artificially and can lead to prolong recovery.

Grief "triggers such as anniversaries, and important milestones can reawaken painful memories and feelings, hence, be prepared for an emotional wallop and know that it's completely normal to grieve every now and then.

Moving on with Life

Remember and celebrate the lives of your loved ones. Anniversaries of a lost loved one can be a difficult time for friends and family, but it can also be a time for remembrance and honouring their memories.

Having collective grieving sessions by spending time with your loved ones can help, do not isolate yourself. What you choose is up to you, if it allows you to honour that unique relationship in a way that feels right to you.

Compiled By

Anselma Kunyanda Haushiku – General Manager Human Resources

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