



Navigating the Multifaceted Landscape of Grief

Grief is something we are all familiar with, whether we recognize our experiences with it or not. The word "grief" has unhappy connotations of pain, heaviness, and loss; however, grief can also be defined as a reflection of our love, hopes, and even expectations. The holiday season can be a particularly difficult time for grief and loss, where there are expectations to be surrounded by family and friends, making memories and sharing joy. If you've experienced a loss of any kind, however, those expectations can serve to make you feel worse.

Often, we think of grief as something that happens when a loved one dies, but grief is experienced in many ways during our lives. We grieve any event which challenges our ideas of ourselves, normalcy, hopes, expectations, or our connections. Grief can manifest and present itself in a variety of ways, and no two people experience or process grief the same. There are many types

of grief we can experience in our life such as:

Anticipatory grief - knowing something is coming, something you don't want to face. Anticipatory grief is the experience of grieving a loss which has not yet occurred. It is grief for what we know is coming and cannot avoid. While anticipatory grief has been typically associated with impending death, the definition has expanded to include other major losses, including inevitable job loss or income loss, loss of independence or physical mobility due to illness, relocation, or the end of a friendship or relationship.

Grief from losing employment – being laid off, unexpectedly fired, or injured in the workplace.

Grief from the end of a romantic relationship, friendship, or familial connection - breakups, divorce, conflict with a friend or growing apart, as well as making an intentional decision to distance

oneself from family due to unhealthy dynamics.

Grief from life transitions - graduation, going to university, moving away from your friends, transitioning into adulthood, kids growing up and moving out, moving/relocating, or changing careers, just to name a few.

Grief of losing a pet - while grief and loss are generally discussed in the context of a person, losing a pet can be just as devastating. For most, our pets provide unconditional love, companionship and even purpose in our day to day lives. The love felt and shared with an animal companion is as real as the love shared between people, thus the loss and grief are as painfully real, and should be acknowledged more widely.

Grieving the loss of “what could have been” - a moment you had hoped for such as a parent walking you down the aisle that is no longer here, a life you had planned for with another person; such as losing a spouse and having to adjust to a future without them. Or having your expectations for your life altered due to health-related changes, such as permanent injuries, diagnosis of chronic health conditions, or restricted living or mobility.

Grief is a natural healthy human response to loss. Engaging in activities that bring you joy while being patient with yourself and taking care of your physical, mental, and emotional needs is key. Acknowledge what you have lost, whether it's a person, pet, job, relationship, your health, or the future you thought you would have. The loss is real, and it is important. Accept how you are feeling. Acceptance doesn't mean we're “okay” with struggling; what it does

mean, however, is that we recognize in this moment we are grieving and feeling sadness or pain.

Grief can be an isolating experience; remember, you are not alone. Connect with safe, supportive, and understanding people you trust, and/or reach out to a professional counselor who can provide you with a neutral space to grieve and process your feelings in a supportive environment. This is especially important over the holidays, so try and plan meetings and hangouts in advance before peoples' calendars fill up.

We don't “get over” the losses we have experienced but we can integrate the loss into our lives as we move forward, while understanding the grief will be cyclical and not linear – grief does not have a predictable process. However, within our grieving is an opportunity for reflection and determination of what matters most to us and what gives us a sense of meaning. These reflections can support us in co-existing with our grief, while engaging with life despite the pain we're experiencing. While we cannot regain what we have lost, we can choose how we participate in life moving forward, and we do move forward, even when we think we can't. If you find yourself struggling this holiday season, please reach out to Walmsley and we can set you up with a counsellor who will be able to support you through whatever you're going through.

“Grief never ends...But it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith...It is the price of love”. - Author Unknown

Savita Jaswal RSW
Walmsley EFAP



Being there matters.

Contact Us



1.800.481.5511

info@walmsley.ca



www.walmsley.ca

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