



# A Journey through Grief

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Sparrow Nurses Program

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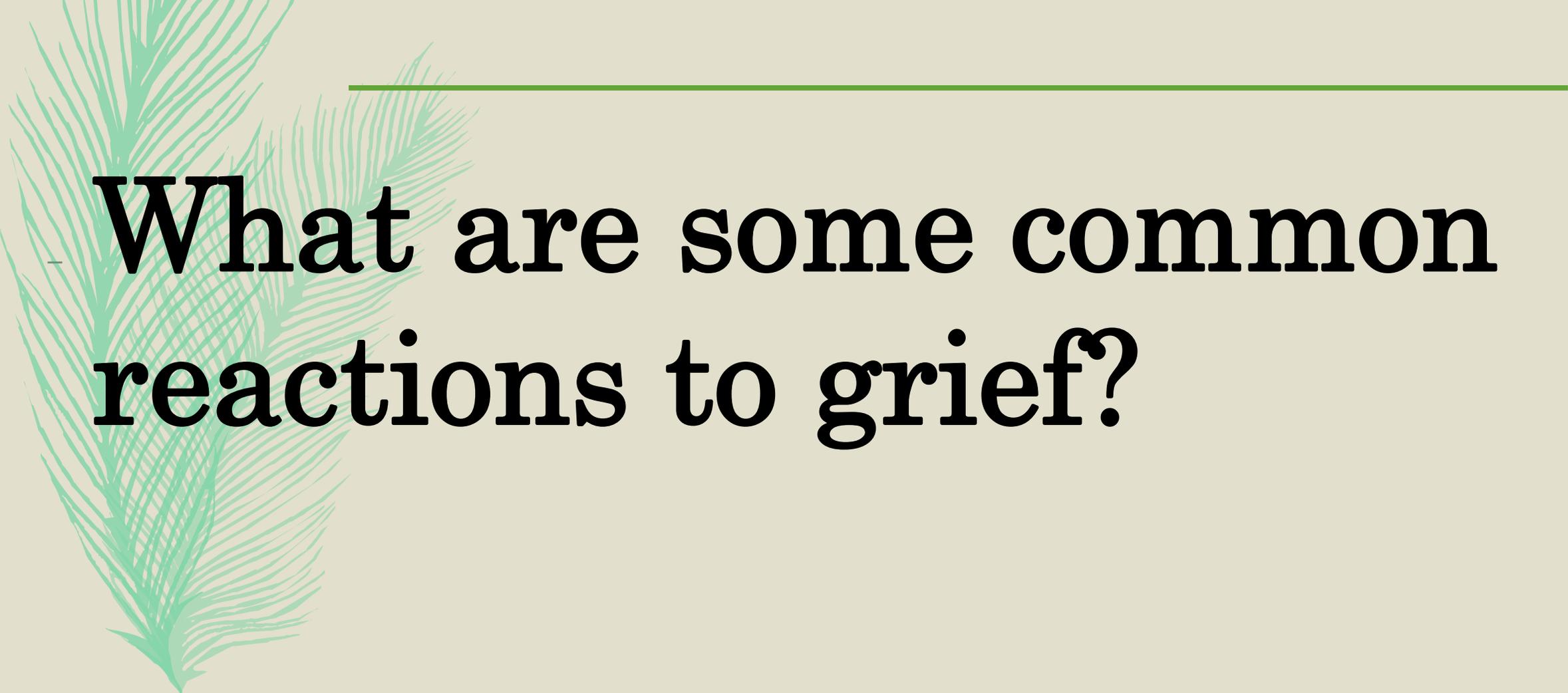
# Grief

- *What is Grief?*

- Grief is a reaction to loss and is more than sadness
- The length of time it takes to adjust to a loss varies from person to person and depends on the circumstance
  - *Grief tends to come and go in waves*
- Grief can affect a person in a number of ways. It can affect your:
  - *Actions*
  - *Emotions*
  - *Thoughts*
  - *Body*
  - *Spirituality*

# Common Reactions to Grief

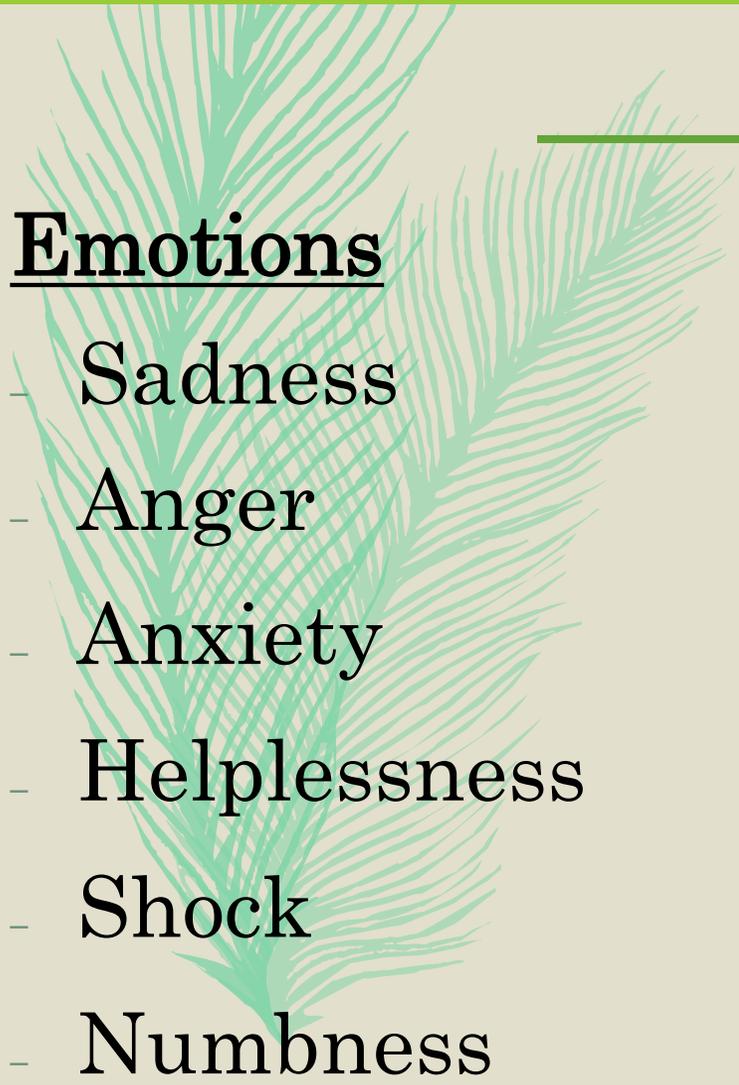
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**What are some common reactions to grief?**

# Common Reactions to Grief

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## Emotions

- Sadness
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Helplessness
- Shock
- Numbness

## Thoughts

- Disbelief
- Confused thinking
- Recurring thoughts or rumination

## Behaviors

- Trouble falling asleep
- Disruption in appetite
- Withdrawing from others
- Avoiding reminders
- Crying

# Common Reactions to a Sudden Death

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- You may feel a high level of stress with a lowered capacity to cope
- Your feelings of control and security may dwindle
  - You may abandon assumptions/expectations about life
- You may feel you have unfinished business, trying to make up for things
- You may find the need to reconstruct the events leading to the death
- You may experience acute grief, shock and numbness for a prolonged period of time
- The intensity of your emotions may increase

**How do you cope  
with grief?**

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# Coping with Grief

## COPING – Depleting/Unhealthy

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- Ignore It
- Keep on Pushing
- Not Seeking Support
- Use of Substances
- Isolating Yourself
- Self-Harm Behavior

## COPING – Sustainable/Healthy

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- Seeking Out Help/Develop a Support System
- Grief support groups
- Connecting with things that are soothing and healing
- Exercise
- Writing or Journaling
- Spirituality/Faith Practices

# Mourning

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# Mourning

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– **Mourning** is the outward expression of our **grief**; it is the expression of one's **grief**.

– *Adapted from “Understanding Your Grief: Ten Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart.” (Wolfelt, 2003)*

# The Journey through Grief: Importance of Understanding

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- Understanding the journey through grief can:
  - Help you find your way
  - Validate your feelings
  - Recognize when outside support may be helpful
- Each bereaved individual is unique
  - Each loss is unique

# The Journey of Grief: Four Components of Mourning

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## 1) *Acceptance of the Loss*

- Coming to terms with the loss

- *Not uncommon to experience shock or disbelief*

- natural cushion against the full impact of pain

- On an emotional level, it can be difficult to accept

- *Not uncommon to experience compassion fatigue/secondary trauma*

- *Not uncommon to experience broken-heartedness*

### **Acceptance**

- To many acceptance may imply a disconnection, severing ties, forgetting

- Acceptance marks the moment when you are ready to begin the journey to healing

# How are we experiencing compassion fatigue/secondary trauma?

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- Compassion fatigue is a condition characterized by emotional and physical exhaustion leading to a diminished ability to empathize or feel compassion for others, often described as the negative cost of caring. It is sometimes referred to as secondary traumatic stress. (Wikipedia definition)

# The Journey of Grief: Four Components of Mourning

## 2): *To Work through the Pain and Grief*

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Normal to feel a range of emotions

May try to block out or avoid intense and unpleasant feelings

Grief is likely to resurface at unexpected times

If unexpressed it can lead to some emotional difficulties

Engage in self care & self-compassion (mindfulness, common humanity, self-kindness)

<https://centerformsc.org/10-self-compassion-practices-for-covid-19/>

Find a way to memorialize your loss

Find ways to express your emotions: writing, drawing, music, talking, crying

# The Journey of Grief: Four Components of Mourning

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## - *3) Adjustment Period*

- Loss requires us to make external, internal, and emotional adjustments
- Take time to reflect on how the loss has changed things for you
  - May need to learn new skills or develop/increase social support network
  - Reliance and resilience
  - **Readjustment** happens over an extended period of time
    - Dealing with Compassion Fatigue

\*\*Adapted from Worden's Four Tasks of Grieving

# The Journey of Grief: Four Components of Mourning

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- **4) *Pace and Purpose while continuing the Journey***
  - Less Resistance in the Pace
    - Tears may come more easily
    - Can talk through the pain instead of ignoring it
    - Although difficult days still exist, the good days experienced may be more frequent
  - Identified Purpose
    - Finding a way to remain spiritually connected; allowing yourself to continue living
      - Allows for thoughts and memories while simultaneously engaging in activities that are meaningful to you
- New patterns in your life can emerge during this time

\*\*Adapted from Worden's Four Tasks of Grieving

# Coping with Grief & Loss: Emotional & Physical Well-Being

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- Rest, exercise and eat properly
- Try to maintain your daily routines and schedule
- Try to forgive others for being insensitive
- Build your spiritual strength; engage in self-compassion
- Hold on to hope – possibility; relief and restoration
- Be honest and authentic with yourself
  - Allow yourself to grieve and mourn
  - Acknowledge the impact
- Express your pain to someone who will understand and acknowledge your feelings
- Seek professional counseling support

# How do I know if I need to seek Help?

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Many people are able to move through their grief and resume a changed but full life. However, it is important to note that grief reactions do vary across individuals and there is no time limit for which they may resolve.

- **Please seek help if you:**
  - Do not feel better as time goes on
  - Have difficulty functioning in your daily life
  - Experience suicidal thoughts
  - Have other traumatic history/experiences

# Mental Health Resources for Nurses

- “Below are some key resources, specifically curated for nurses”
  - <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/hnhn/2017-year-of-the-healthy-nurse/mental-health-wellness/>
- American Psychiatric Nurses Association Managing Stress & Self Care during COVID-19: Information for Nurses
- American Holistic Nurses Association’s Holistic Stress Management website
- The National Academy of Medicine’s Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-being Resources to Support the Health and Well-Being of Clinicians During the COVID-19 Outbreak
- HNHN blog Six Tips for Nurses Coping with the COVID-19 Pandemic
- The Ohio State University’s (OSU) COVID-19 Resources, including video on coping by Chief Wellness Officer Dr. Bernadette Melnyk
- OSU 8 week online series: Staying Calm and Well in the Midst of the COVID-19 Storm
- *American Nurse* article “9 Dimensions of Wellness”
- Physicians for Human Rights webinar Science-driven Solutions for Combating COVID-19: Mental Health Impacts with Dr. Gail Saltz and Dr. Kerry Sulkowicz
- **Grief Resources:**
  - [https://engage.healthynursehealthynation.org/blogs/8/684?\\_hstc=53609399.1ff9817d9a794c9ec9137bd4429d0055.1619759553398.1619759553398.1&\\_hssc=53609399.2.1619759553399&\\_hsfp=3886102949](https://engage.healthynursehealthynation.org/blogs/8/684?_hstc=53609399.1ff9817d9a794c9ec9137bd4429d0055.1619759553398.1619759553398.1619759553398.1&_hssc=53609399.2.1619759553399&_hsfp=3886102949)
  - <https://www.centerforloss.com/>

# Suicide Prevention Resources

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- National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI): <https://www.nami.org/Home>
- Trevor Project (LGBTQ Suicide Resources): <http://www.thetrevorproject.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: <http://www.sprc.org>
- American Association of Suicidology: <http://www.suicidology.org>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org>
- QPR Institute: <http://www.qprinstitute.com/>
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line – free, 24/7 support for those in crisis. Text 741741

# Sexual Assault/Relationship Violence Resources

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- Women’s Center of Greater Lansing:  
<http://www.womenscenterofgreaterlansing.org/>
- End Violent Encounters (EVE – Domestic & Sexual Violence Support) –  
<https://www.eveinc.org/>
- Capitol Area Response Effort (CARE):  
<https://www.lansingmi.gov//721/Capital-Area-Response-Effort-CARE>
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center: <https://www.nsvrc.org/>
- Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN): <https://www.rainn.org/>
- National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1.800.656.HOPE

