

COPING WITH LONELINESS – AFTER THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE



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Who can really tell you how to grieve?



OVERT or active Pain-

Endless crying

Anger

Denial

Inconsolable sorrow

Passive and Introverted Pain-

Silence

Numbness

Withdrawal

Grief changes you.....

- For you to feel the grief, this is an acknowledgement of the **VALUE** of the relationship that you had with the person
- How somebody else grieves or handles their situation, has nothing to do with how **YOU** cope.
- Everybody will have their own personal experiences with loss.
- **You will change** – either positive or negative



Grief and Loneliness – are these the same?

- **Grief** is the result of an **EVENT** that has happened e.g. death; loss of a relationship; divorce; separation
- **Loneliness** is a **SYMPTOM** of grief - spending more time alone; loss of interest in attending social events; gaining weight or losing sleep; feeling alone or isolated

WHAT grief and loneliness does to you:

- Sustained grief and loneliness can take a toll, both physically and emotionally.
- It can **FREEZE** us into **apathy, listlessness, constant worry and suicide ideation.**



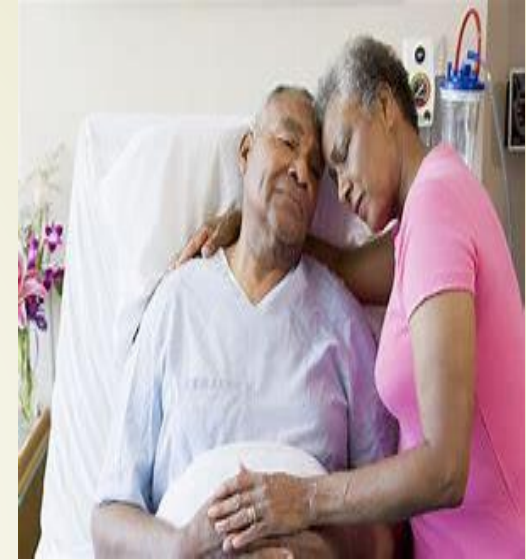
Grief and Loss

Grief – a natural response to a loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away.

Loss – the **absence** of someone or something – a loved one; a job; separation; divorce

Grieving presents significant challenges, regardless of age or circumstance in life.

Relationship Loss



Anticipated Loss – with warning; an expected death

Sudden or unexpected Loss – without warning



Ambiguous Loss – that cannot be explained

This loss occurs without closure or understanding

- **How did the person really die?**
- **Why can't they find the body?**
- **I know the killer/s. Why aren't they in jail?**
- **I still don't believe HOW they died! I want to know more!**

It leaves a person **searching for answers** and delays the process of grieving.

It often results in **complicated or unresolved grief**



The Grief Journey: **Normal Grief** (uncomplicated)

- Emotions that are normal and expected.
Most common type of grief as persons cope with the death of a loved one
- Can be acute, immediately after a loss – **anger; denial disbelief; yearning**. May slowly diminish with the passage of time, as feelings give way to **acceptance** of the loss.
- No ‘right’ way to grieve.



Complicated Grief – when grief does not go away

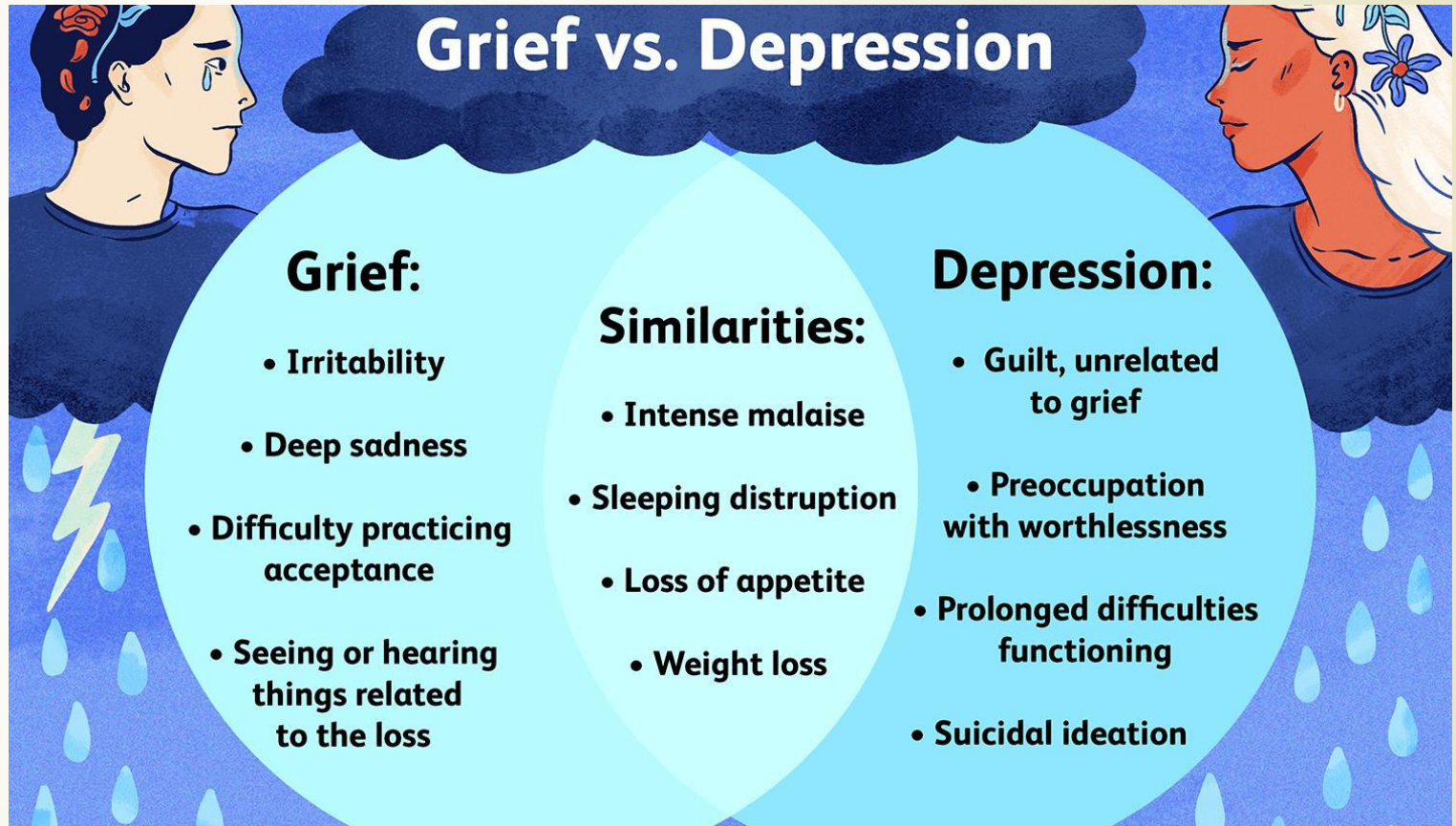
(can lead to severe depression if there is no intervention)

- **Intense longing and yearning** for your deceased loved one
- Intrusive thoughts or images of your loved one
- **Denial of the death** or sense of disbelief – what really happened????
- Imagining that your loved one is alive
- **Searching** for your deceased loved one in familiar places
- **Avoiding** things that remind you of your loved one
- **Extreme anger or bitterness** over your loss/relationship
- Feeling that **life is empty or meaningless**



The difference between Grief and Depression

Complicated Grief can lead to severe depression, if there is no intervention or an attempt to understand the loss.



Loneliness – the most chronic problem facing the world today – Mother Teresa

Loneliness is the **ABSENCE** of a needed relationship:

- Something is **missing** from my life
- When I see other couples, I want to **cry**
- Why did God allow this to happen to our family?
- I am **tired** of being alone
- I feel **abandoned** – who will be here for me now?
- Family members and friends don't want to come around me because I am always so sad, crying, **talking about the loss**



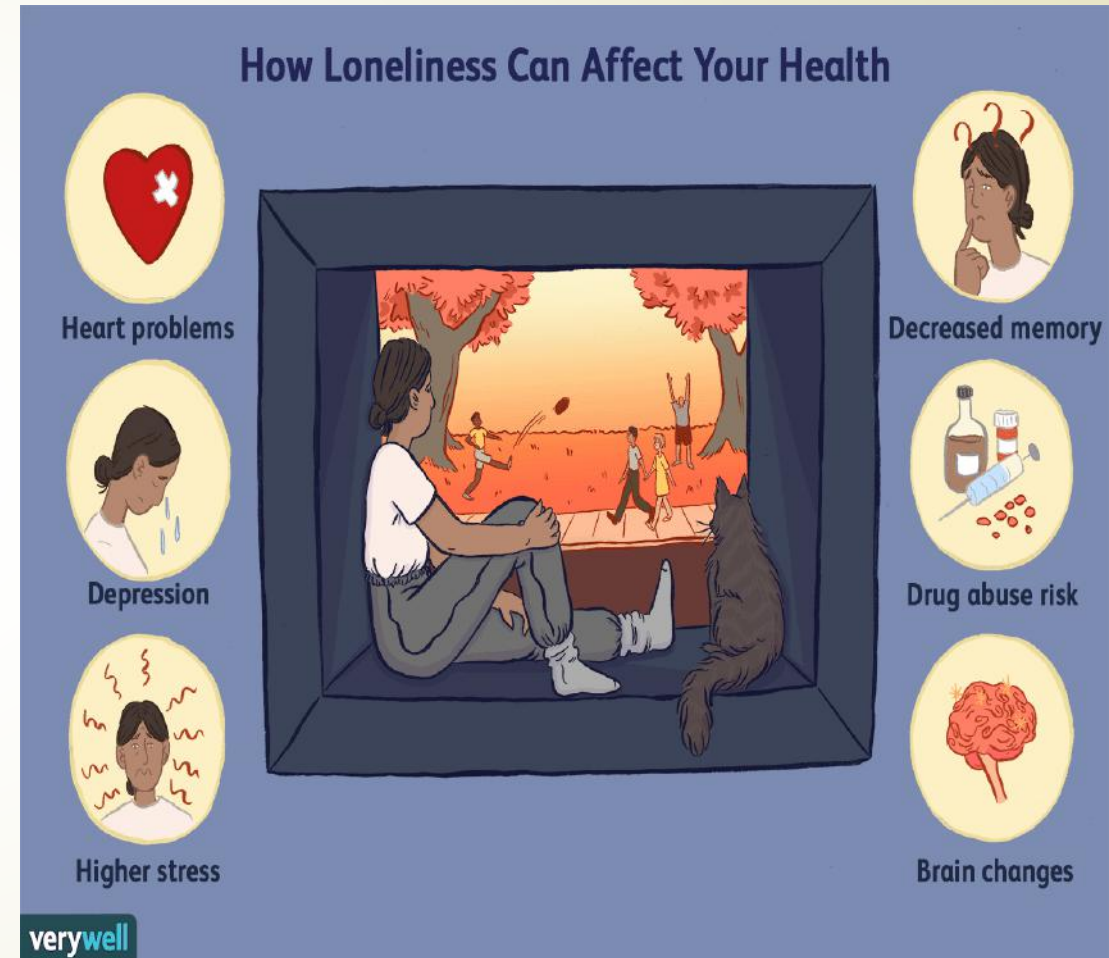
Loneliness - the **Absence** ...of their presence

- After all the tasks are done for the day, and night settles in.....
- When something is missing...
- When the **heartache begins**....the longing for their presence...their voice...just to be there....
- Nobody to bother – to talk to – to call up
- Nobody to be around, who **understands you** for who you are
- The empty chair where he/she sat



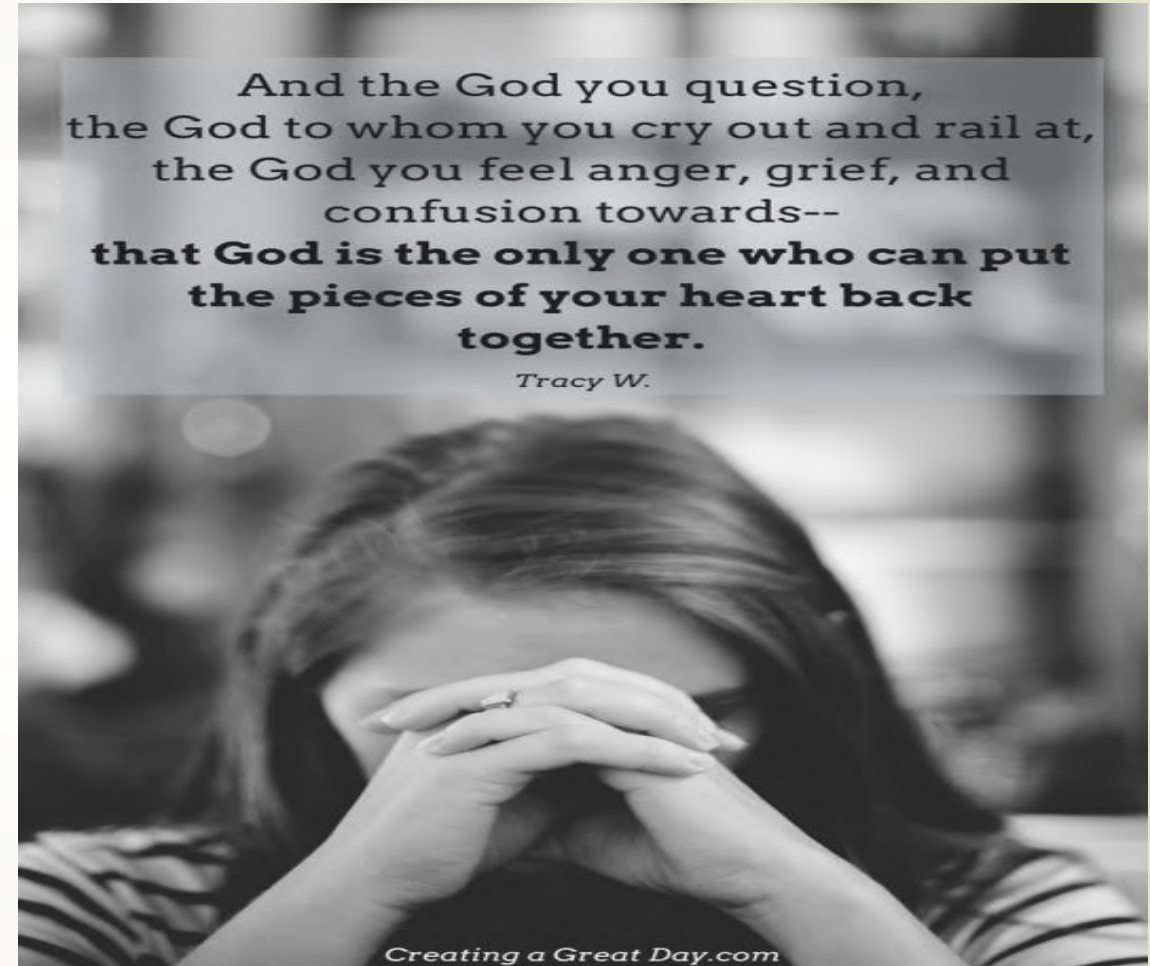
Consequences of Loneliness (a public health issue)

- Over 35% of adults (45 and older) are lonely
- **Loneliness is a significant predictor of poor health**
- ▶ Lonely people are less likely to be involved in social events, which can mean poorer health for mental, physical *and* emotional well-being.
- **45%** increase in risk of death
- **59%** greater risk of mental and physical decline
- Decline in your ability to perform activities of daily living (ADLs)
- Development of brain biomarkers associated with **Alzheimer's disease**



Where is God in all of this?

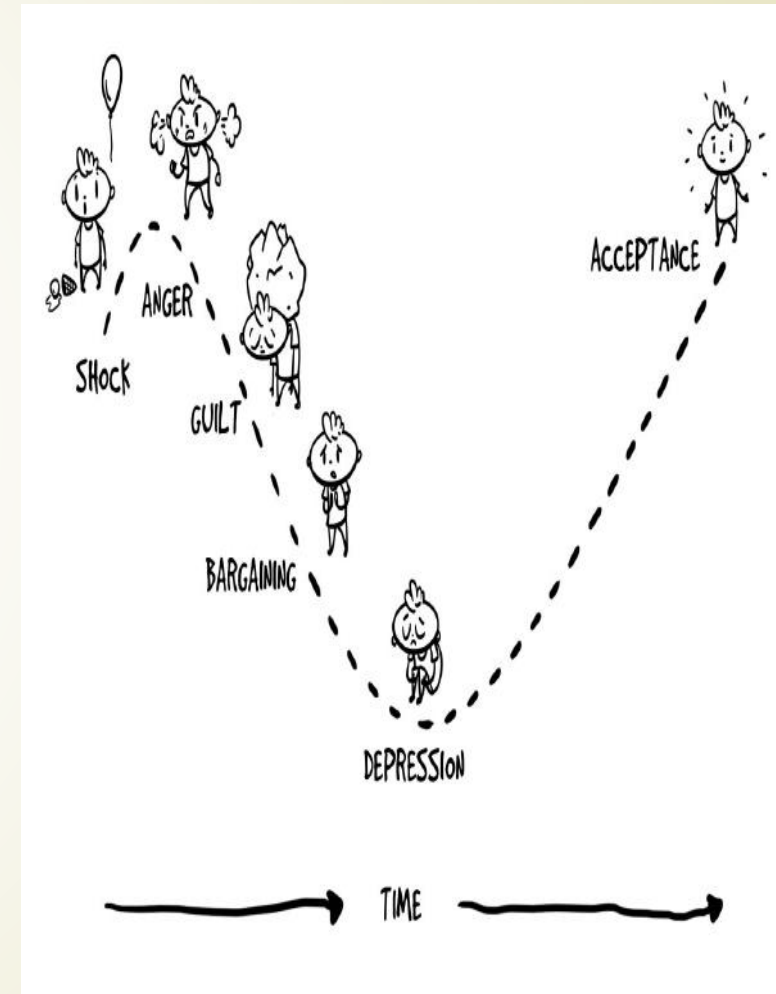
- ▶ Many times He meets our needs, what we have asked for - through other people
- ▶ When we shut ourselves away from others, we may fail to see His message or His gifts



✓ Symptoms of grief: Tick all the ones you may have.

How many of these symptoms have you experienced lately - in the last three months?

- ✓ **Emotional** – anger; anxiety; despair; emptiness; hate; panic; relief; self-pity; resentment; hopelessness
- ✓ **Mental** – absent-minded; confusion; loss of control; sense of unreality; detachment
- ✓ **Behavioural** – crying; dreams of deceased; isolation; restlessness; social withdrawal
- ✓ **Spiritual** – anger at God; questioning; searching for meaning; drawing closer to God; visitations
- ✓ **Physical** – chest pains; diarrhea; dizziness; fatigue; unable to sleep; lack of energy; headaches



Coping mechanisms – FINDING MEANING

(Talking about the LOSS and trying to find meaning)

This is central to the reconstruction of meaning.

- Is it getting better? If not, why not?

SOME Intrusive THOUGHTS...

- It has been a long time. Why don't I feel better?
- How can I go on?
- How can I live without my partner?
- I feel suicidal. How do I cope?
- My friends avoid me. I talk about it all the time.
- No-one understands me. I feel all alone.
- Counselling hasn't helped me. What next?
- I feel guilty. I'm making everyone around me unhappy...



HOW to cope with the loss of a loved one – in your own, individual way.

1. **Acknowledge** your pain.
2. **Accept** that grief can trigger many different and unexpected emotions.
3. **Understand** that your grieving process will be **unique** to you.
4. **Seek out face-to-face support** from people who care about you.
5. **Support** yourself emotionally, by taking care of yourself physically.
6. **Recognize** the difference between grief and depression.



HOW WE
WANT
GRIEF TO
WORK



HOW GRIEF
ACTUALLY
WORKS



Coping with Loneliness



- **Ask for Help** – talk to someone about how you are feeling
- **Have Patience** – Take your time to grieve and heal
- **Journal** – Write down your thoughts and **challenge** those that do not add value to you
- **Self-care** – Look after yourself. Eat properly; stay hydrated; sleep; exercise
- **Find Support** – online chat; support group. Stay connected with friends
- **Goals** – Set realistic goals that you want to achieve. Take it one day at a time.



Dreams



Clothes



Personal Objects



The need to have keepsakes as a reminder. Is this healthy?

This can be a coping mechanism.

Coping with Loss - *Remembering*



Post Card Activity – *the final farewell*

- What would you want to tell your loved one?
- State some final parting words

Post card



From

To





Hope
CHANGES
everything