

Good Grief

by Toni Lilley

As happy normal human beings our lives are enriched by those things that make life meaningful - a home, wife or husband, children, friends, a satisfying job, material comforts, money and security. When we suffer the loss of anything important it is vital that we deal with it appropriately in order to enjoy continuing health and happiness. Naturally if the loss is great, the effects are deep, throwing us into grief and despair. Often, because we have little experience of deep loss, we can become more anxious, which drives us into deeper despair and despondency.

These losses do not need to be great for us to go through the 'grief process'. And people will deal differently with loss. Some of these can be:

death of a spouse, child, close relative or friend,

loss of a girl/boy friend

divorce

loss of a job

failure in school or job

loss of home and security

moving away from the area in which you have lived

change of management/boss

being passed over for advancement

retirement

child leaving home

loss of a family pet

loss of social stature/self esteem

miscarriage

broken engagement

loss of happy expectation

loss of health, eyesight, limb, etc.

loss of youth

loss of material possessions

Some of these listed are 'little griefs' but the way we handle them will probably be indicative of the way we handle the big griefs when they come along.

Based on studies carried out, patterns can be seen to emerge. The idea of stages of grief was first presented by Dr. Erich Lindemann, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard, who described the grief process in an article entitled "Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief" published in *The American Journal of Psychiatry*, September, 1944. This showed the difference between normal grief reactions and abnormal or morbid grief. He also showed the importance of helping the grief-stricken person face up to the struggle of working through their grief. The person has to "extricate himself from the bondage to the deceased and find new patterns of rewarding interaction." Lindemann then described five things he saw in acute grief:

(1) somatic distress,

(2) preoccupation with the image of the deceased,

(3) guilt,

(4) hostile reactions, and

(5) loss of patterns of conduct.

We can expand on these five stages and the following are considered normal processes through which people must go in order to deal with their loss. They may not necessarily go through all of them or in the order in which they are listed. Also, it is sometimes impossible to see each stage clearly as the person merges from one stage to another.

Stage 1 - Shock

In cases of severe sorrow and tragedy, we are sometimes temporarily anaesthetized in order to deal with the experience. This saves us from having to face the reality all at once. This may last anywhere from a few minutes to a few hours to a few days. If it goes on into weeks professional help should be sought.

The shock may involve complete withdrawal from reality or more commonly, a sense of serenity and even the outward appearance of happiness. In the case of a newly grieving widow, she may seem to be radiant and happy at the gathering after the funeral but in actual fact is in a temporary state of shock. This allows her to cope until the next stage. Her friends will realize that in the near future she will require support when this strong exterior may break down. Through this time she should be encouraged to keep active and continue to make decisions for herself. To take over for her at this time may hinder the grief process.

Stage 2 - Expressing Emotion

When the person begins to come out of the initial shock there may be times in the succeeding days and months when the person says "I just can't believe it has happened". Intellectually they know it did happen but emotionally they have trouble accepting it as reality. Emotional release comes when it begins to dawn on us how dreadful the loss is. Sudden realization may come at any time so that there is an uncontrollable urge to express grief. This is to be encouraged as it is what we are supposed to do. Crying is a healthy expression that washes away grief as well as cleanses the spirit.

In our society where men are often made to feel that it is 'unmanly' to cry, they will hold themselves tense and refuse to let go. This will be detrimental to his health and will hinder the grieving process. He should be encouraged to go off and let his grief take its natural course. Conversely, if the person, male or female gets stuck in weeping for too long that too will retard the healing process.

Stage 3 - Depression and Loneliness

"No one knows how I feel" is a common expression when utter depression and isolation come over us. It is true that no-one knows *exactly* how we feel as we each face the same kind of loss in different ways. But this is a normal reaction after any significant loss or tragedy. What we need to remember is that one day the depression *will* pass. "This too shall pass" is a simple phrase that is comforting at times when stress, depression and loneliness seems to make everything appear black.

Stage 4 - Guilt

Normal guilt is usually felt around the loss of a loved one when the thought that we could have been kinder, more loving and affectionate, etc. while the person was alive consumes us. Feeling guilty out of all proportion to our own involvement in the problem is neurotic guilt and will hinder our recovery. Unresolved guilt and misunderstood emotions can make us miserable for years or may manifest themselves in physical symptoms of distress. Facing both normal grief and neurotic grief is important in dealing with this stage of our problem.

Stage 5 - Physical Symptoms of Distress

In Touch for Health we know so clearly how unresolved emotion can be the precursor to physical problems in the body. This is especially so at times of grief and stress. Often a visit to the doctor will not show any physical reason for the discomfort but the pain is very real. Body and mind together can perform miracles in healing the body and the person must be helped to understand the role of unresolved emotion and be balanced in order to deal with the problem.

Stage 6 - Fear and Anxiety

When we can think of nothing but our loss we can become anxious and fearful. Anxiety attacks can raise blood pressure and increase heart rate so that we become even more fearful about our physical wellbeing. It becomes difficult to concentrate and we lose our effectiveness. Imagination runs riot and

all sorts of unpleasant thoughts come to us. If what we have lost has been part of our lives for a long time it is hard to believe that life will be OK without it or them. Fear of the unknown or something we don't understand can almost paralyze us so that we are unable to function normally. It becomes easier for us to withdraw and stay at home rather than go out into society again. Using ESR and defusing the fear is important at this time so the person can get on with their grief work.

Stage 7 - Anger and Resentment

After we are able to deal with our emotions and fears it becomes easier for us to express the strong feelings of hostility and resentment of which we may not have been aware. When something precious has been taken from us we sometimes go through a stage when we need to place blame on something or something related to the loss. A healthy expression of anger is encouraged particularly if the person can be encouraged to shout or punch a pillow. Once again, holding in these very strong emotions will be damaging to the person and will make the grief process harder to go through.

Stage 8 - Hope and Readjustment to Reality

We are never sure how long grief will last. No two people will grieve in the same way. But at last we begin to feel more in control of our lives and we glimpse a little hope that things are returning to normal. It feels safe to begin to return to activities and work again. We can suffer setbacks when things remind us about our loss but the fact that we have come through will allow us to finally get back to living our lives. We may feel that things are not the same as before and to a large extent this is true. We have had to deal with living with our loss and adjusting accordingly. We are different people and depending on how we handled the experience, we are stronger or weaker, healthier or sicker.

Balancing Using the Five Elements

We can use our understanding of the Law of Five Elements when balancing someone who is dealing with loss. After a fourteen muscle assessment we can get a better idea of where

the person is. We can't automatically assume the person will be in metal, dealing with grief, guilt regret. Often if the person is in shock, they can appear to be jovial and on the edge of hysteria, a way of controlling grief. Empathy/sympathy at this time can lead them through to appropriate grief via the Shen cycle.

As an example, we remember the new widow (Metal) who becomes fearful and anxious (Water), magnifying her fears out of proportion with strange sounds in the house at night only to realize they have been there all along but unheard and unnoticed while her husband was there with her. With this realization come anger and resentment (Wood), that he could leave her alone to cope in the world. Gradually interaction with family and friends allows her to return to normal living (Joy) and finally she is able to empathize with others in a similar situation (Earth).

Balancing Procedure

Use the goal "*I am at a place of peace over my loss*" and after a fourteen muscle balance use the Law of Five Elements to determine the meridian for correction. Check by circuit locating the neurolymphatics and testing the under energy muscles. This meridian's element and its emotion shows where the person is, or may be where they are stuck. At this point you can also test to see which correction is appropriate for the person.

Correction Options

A Sound Balance using the Law of Five Elements is especially effective and understanding the Ko and Shen cycles is essential. If the person needs to shout, they may attempt to bypass the emotion by laughing, or by lapsing into crying in order to control the anger, particularly if they are unused to expressing this emotion.

A simple 14 Muscle Balance and E.S.R. is a powerful way to raise the person's energy and provide an outlet for any unexpressed emotion. Active listening is especially important at this time.

Neuro Emotional Reflexes from the Professional Health Provider III Course are

also powerful. These points require hard sustained stimulation for 40 seconds and the person needs to be aware of the emotion of

the element while the correction is taking place.

