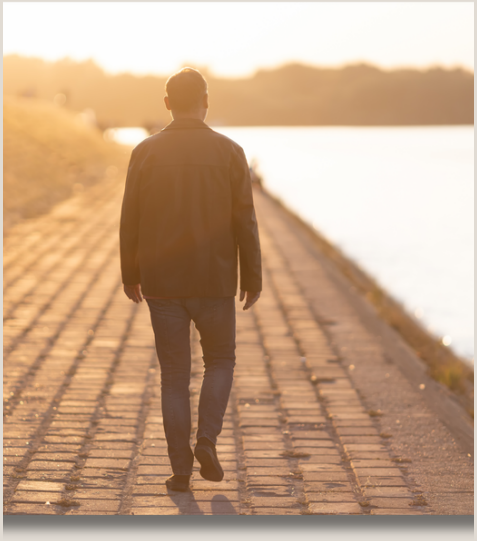
PAMELA NELSON
BIBLICAL COUNSELOR & SR. SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR
WWW.PAMELANELSON.ORG



GUIDANCE AS WE

Grieve Our Losses

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.
C. S. Lewis



The way we experience loss and grief is very individual; we each express grief in our own way.

While there are documented stages of grief, grief and loss are as individual as a fingerprint or a snowflake and grief is not linear.

People also have different “styles” of grieving. Some people may express their grief verbally, or cry easily; other people may channel their grief into activity. All of these responses are normal; how we grieve is not a measure of how we love or of how deeply we experience our loss.

(Read More Here)

In this guide you will find:

Resources, Journaling through Grief Guide, and more...

Healthy Grieving



Grief is the natural reaction to loss. Grief is both a universal and a personal experience. Individual experiences of grief vary and are influenced by the nature of the loss. When emotions surface it is important to pay attention.

Attend to your grief, or it will attend to you.
Emotions don't need to be understood, but they need to be processed. You may need to give yourself permission to feel your feelings. (See the Feelings Word List Attachment to help you identify what you are feeling and where you are feeling it in your body.) We cannot ignore of stuff our emotions down for long. Grief will show up in your body as illness or pain. Outbursts of anger can occur if emotions are not dealt with.

Process your loss with a counselor and a few healthy friends.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Grief may cause individuals to withdraw from their relationships. Additionally, the stress of a loss may also cause conflict to erupt within relationships because people grief differently and at a different pace. So, we need a few healthy friends and/or a trained professional to help us process. When others help carry grief, the load can feel less heavy.

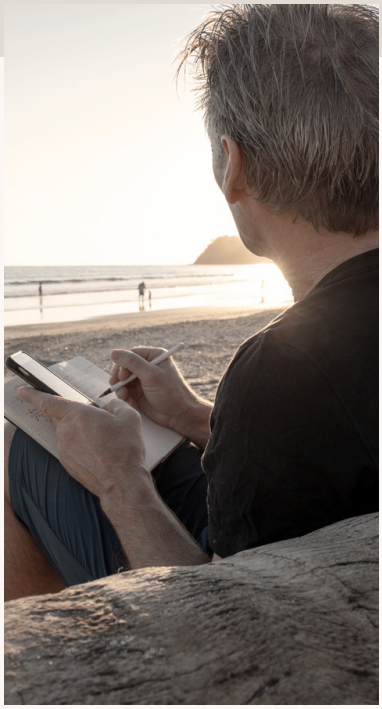
We receive from them something Dr. John Townsend calls "relational nutrients" when we grief with another person. What we receive through others is something we cannot give or get within ourselves. There are neurons in our brain that respond to other people's facial expressions and experiences. Through caring experiences with others, our brains are changed, and we can find our way to healthy living in new realities. Joining a grief support group is also very helpful as we hear others say, "Me, too."

Journal your grief.
Grieving on our own and journaling will allow our emotions to not stay hidden from ourselves. Acknowledging the hard, good, and challenging will help us to remain honest. The Psalms are filled with the psalmist crying out to God with despair and hope, often within verses of each other. Writing it down is a form of release and often helps on our journey to adjusting to our losses. (Consider using the Faith and Grief Journal here.)

Release expectations of yourself and others.
"Recovery is not like an elevator that takes you from the basement of despair to the penthouse of peace and understanding. It is more like a maze. Where you go forward a bit and then you go back a few steps. You cover the same ground again, and you find yourself back at the beginning." Brooke Noel, *I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye*

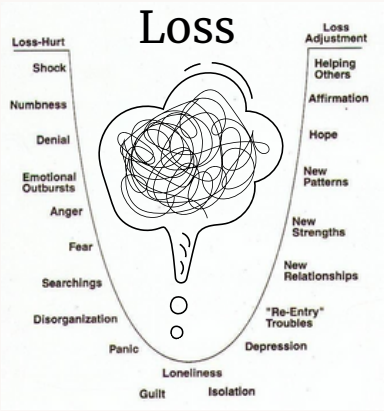
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Healthy Grieving, continued.



Depending on the role we have in relationships, we may be called on to care for other's grief as we are trying to navigate our own. Setting our own healing aside will only delay the process of healing. We can not beat grief by distracting ourself away from it. Emotions will surface and they are not linear.

We can not put a timeline on grief or stop the shock of when an emotion arises. Be kind and patient with yourself and release yourself from "getting over it." We adjust from our loss and the pain will diminish, but our life expands around it and then find we don't bump into it as often.



Address your physical needs.
Grief may disrupt an individual's digestive system, sleep patterns, and immune function to name a few physical effects. Address these physical needs with a physician or naturopath.

Physical and mental health are intertwined. Make sure you're nourishing your body adequately and consistently with quality food and water. Consider incorporating mindful movement into your day, such as walking outside. Beauty also heals our brains as we pause and experience it. Give yourself permission to linger in nature and breathe in fresh air that will oxygenate your cells and allow your brain function to be more clear.

Care for your soul.
Healing the soul requires vulnerability and exposing the darkness and stored pain to God's Light. John 1:5 says, "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness and with Him, Hope can arise again.

Invite His light to shine into your darkness through acceptance, forgiveness, and love, each of which brings healing and new life. All of these actions take place in our hearts. There, we can learn to safely look at our pain and let God do the healing and releasing so peace can follow...and yes even joy.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me –watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."
Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message Paraphrase.)



Losses we Grieve

- Death of a person
- Death of a pet
- Infertility
- Loss of a home
- Infidelity
- Loss of a job
- Divorce
- Moving/loss of community
- Grieving someone you can't remember (ex. a parent who died when you were an infant)
- Miscarriage and stillbirth
- Estrangement from family
- Loss of culture or tradition
- Loss of hopes and dreams for the future
- Loss of physical health
- Loss of independence
- Loss of faith/church community
- Loss of identity or sense of self
- Loss following an abortion
- Loss of friendship
- Loss of mental health of loved one
- Loss of security
- Loss of freedoms
- Who we used to be
- Loss of simplicity
- Being misunderstood



What is Lament?

"Lament is the heartfelt and honest talking to God through the struggles of life . Simply stated, lament is a prayer in pain that leads to trust."

Pastor Mark Vroegop

"Most people think the book of Psalms is all about thanksgiving and praise. But there are 150 psalms in the Bible, and 65 of them are psalms of lament. Every human emotion is expressed in the book of Psalms.

If God leads you to lament and you don't know how to start, just go to Psalms. As you read, underline every verse that you identify with and every verse that encourages you. Say these verses back to God, whether they're psalms of praise or psalms that cry out to God in pain.

Your prayers of praise and lament are worship–and God hears every one of them."

Pastor Rick Warren

Grief and The Holidays



This holiday will be different. Experiencing the holidays exactly the same as they were before the loss is not possible. Striving to make the holiday “normal” will only exhaust us because they can only be different.

Honor what you need this holiday.
Some will find comfort by honoring traditions, while others will find them unbearably painful. What do you need this holiday? You may want to process with a trusted friend who is not a family member or counselor. Then, at your comfort level, discuss with your family the activities you want to include or exclude this year.

While it may seem more comfortable to cancel the holiday all together, isolation during times of grief can quickly lead to desolation. Seek a healthy option for honoring both what you need and an opportunity to find the good in this new season.

There are many losses we grieve on a holiday. With the death of a loved one, the most important thing to remember is there is no right or wrong way to celebrate the holiday season after the death. The best coping mechanism for the first holiday season is to plan ahead, get support from others and take it easy. Release yourself from carrying other people's grief. And, release yourself from the expectations of others and what they're walking through.

Remember, we are not alone and we don’t enter into our holiday in our own strength. The scripture says: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. (2 Corinthians 12:9 NASB)

Perspective is: *a particular attitude toward or way of regarding something; a point of view.* Pray and ask God for His eyes to see and His perspective on these holidays. Picture Jesus with you as you enter into each holiday for He is Emmanuel, God with us. (Matthew 1:23) Holy Spirit is the Advocate (John 14:26) who is continually advocating for us.

Pause and take a deep breath. Breathe in on a 4-count and breathe out on a 6-count. This will physically calm your nervous system. As you do, remember Psalm 23:1: The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need. (Repeat.)

Some holiday options to consider after the death of a loved one:

- Let others help and come alongside you. The gift of presence is the greatest present.
- Donate in honor of your loved one.
- Simplify the occasion.
- Have a moment of silence during a holiday toast to honor your loved one.
- Make your loved one’s favorite dish and share stories about them.
- Create a new holiday tradition.

Faith and Grief Journal

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: "Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you." Jeremiah 30:2

Without overthinking, freely journal how life has changed since your loss. Journaling is very healing and therapeutic when you express your grief by writing it down. It is a way for you to see what is inside and validate what is happening. There are Bible verses and prompts to consider below that can be helpful at any stage of loss you are in.

Also, know that God can handle anything that is on your heart, even questioning Him. He is near to You and loves you with an everlasting love! (Jeremiah 31:3)

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3

Your broken heart may be the loss of a person, dream, your health, a relationship, a job or anything surprising that you were counting on.

- What is the loss that breaks your heart?
- How have you been working through that loss?
- How are you inviting God into your pain?

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
Matthew 5:4

- How do you experience grief and loss?
- How have others in your family grieved (or not grieved) losses?
- Most people just want to “get over” loss and pain rather than grieve it.
- What is one small step you can take to further heal today?

You are not alone: Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Deuteronomy 31:6

- Where is fear showing up in your journey today?
- God has promised He will never leave you. When is it hardest to believe His promises for you?
- You are not alone, but it can feel that way when others don't experience your exact loss. Consider finding a counselor, grief group or church to make new connections with others who are in a season of loss. Who is one person you can reach out to today?

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saved those who are crushed in spirit. Psalm 34:18

End of life and loss can be traumatic. Release yourself from any "shoulda-woulda-coulda's" regarding your loss. Reassure yourself you did the best you could under the circumstances surrounding this loss. Invite Jesus to process this memory with you as He was with you during your most troubling of events. Write your thoughts below.

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. - 1 Peter 5:7

- Where is worry and anxiety hijacking you in your grief?
- Is there a specific time of day or night that is harder?
- Rather than distracting yourself or sitting in your worry – Jesus invites us to cast our cares on him. Write down your anxious thoughts and give them to Jesus. Picture Jesus taking your anxiety from you and moving on your behalf. Personify anxiety and speak to it, introducing anxiety to your powerful Savior - who removes it.

The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need.
Psalm 23:1

- How have you noticed your Shepherd meeting your needs in this season?
- Who has God invited to be “His hands and feet” by coming alongside you on His behalf?
- You can have a need and not be a “needy person.” Having a need makes you human, not weak.

My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. Psalm 73:26

God is your strength and portion, and He whispers to us how to care for our physical bodies especially during times of loss.

- Where do you need to adjust your routine to care for your physical body during this stressful time?

Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you. Show me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life. Psalm 143:8

- How are you inviting God into your day to day life?
- In what areas of your life do you want to trust Him more fully?

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens. Ecclesiastes 3:1

We can not replicate former seasons for today's journey. We need to honor the season that we are in.

- What do you need in this season?
- Communicate with family members and friends those needs as you navigate holidays, anniversaries, birthdays or other monumental calendar dates. Don’t force a former chapter on your life as God is writing a new one. Listen to your soul and body for what you need and communicate kindly to others.
- What ideas do you have for honoring this season in your life or the person who may be missing? And if this year your emotions won’t let you focus your attention in that way, that is OK. Be kind and gentle with yourself - communicating what you need. Self-care is not selfish.

A time to be born and a time to die…a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance. Ecclesiastes 3:2,4

When you allow yourself to grieve, you open up the pathway for joy. Those two pathways are located in the same place in the brain.

It is appropriate to experience joy even in a season of deep grief. Laughter is good medicine!

In what ways can you give yourself permission to experience joy?

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

FEELINGS WORD LIST

ACCEPTING/OPEN
CALM
CENTERED
CONTENT
FULFILLED
PATIENT
PEACEFUL
PRESENT
RELAXED
SERENE
TRUSTING

ALIVENESS/JOY
AMAZED
AWE
BLISS
DELIGHTED
EAGER
ECSTATIC
ENCHANTED
ENERGIZED
ENGAGED
ENTHUSIASTIC
EXCITED
FREE
HAPPY
INSPIRED
INVIGORATED
LIVELY
PASSIONATE
PLAYFUL
RADIANT
REFRESHED
REJUVENATED
RENEWED
SATISFIED
THRILLED
VIBRANT

COURAGEOUS/ POWERFUL
ADVENTUROUS
BRAVE
CAPABLE
CONFIDENT
DARING
DETERMINED
FREE
GROUNDED
PROUD
STRONG
WORTHY
VALIANT

CONNECTED/ LOVING
ACCEPTING
AFFECTIONATE
CARING
COMPASSION
EMPATHY
FULFILLED
PRESENT
SAFE
WARM
WORTHY

CURIOUS
ENGAGED
EXPLORING
FASCINATED
INTERESTED
INTRIGUED
INVOLVED
STIMULATED

FRAGILE
HELPLESS
SENSITIVE

GRATEFUL
APPRECIATIVE
BLESSED
DELIGHTED
FORTUNATE
GRACE
HUMBLED
LUCKY
MOVED
THANKFUL
TOUCHED

TENDER
CALM
CARING
LOVING
REFLECTIVE
SELF-LOVING
SERENE
VULNERABLE

HOPEFUL
ENCOURAGED
EXPECTANT
OPTIMISTIC
TRUSTING

EMBARRASSED/ SHAME
ASHAMED
HUMILIATED
INHIBITED
MORTIFIED
SELF-CONSCIOUS
USELESS
WEAK
WORTHLESS

GUILT
REGRET
REMORSEFUL
SORRY

ANGRY/ANNOYED
AGITATED
AGGRAVATED
BITTER
CONTEMPT
CYNICAL
DISDAIN
DISGRUNTLED
DISTURBED
EDGY
EXASPERATED
FRUSTRATED
FURIOUS
GROUCHY
HOSTILE
IMPATIENT
IRRITATED
IRATE
MOODY
ON EDGE
OUTRAGED
PISSED
RESENTFUL
UPSET
VINDICTIVE

FEAR
AFRAID
ANXIOUS
APPREHENSIVE
FRIGHTENED
HESITANT
NERVOUS
PANIC
PARALYZED
SCARED
TERRIFIED
WORRIED

DESPAIR / SAD
ANGUISH
DEPRESSED
DESPONDENT
DISAPPOINTED
DISCOURAGED
FORLORN
GLOOMY
GRIEF
HEARTBROKEN
HOPELESS
LONELY
LONGING
MELANCHOLY
SORROW
TEARY
UNHAPPY
UPSET
WEARY
YEARNING

DISCONNECTED/ NUMB
ALOOF
BORED
CONFUSED
DISTANT
EMPTY
INDIFFERENT
ISOLATED
LETHARGIC
LISTLESS
REMOVED
RESISTANT
SHUT DOWN
UNEASY
WITHDRAWN

UNSETTLED/ DOUBT
APPREHENSIVE
CONCERNED
DISSATISFIED
DISTURBED
GROUCHY
HESITANT
INHIBITED
PERPLEXED
QUESTIONING
REJECTING
RELUCTANT
SHOCKED
SKEPTICAL
SUSPICIOUS
UNGROUNDED
UNSURE
WORRIED

STRESSED/TENSE
ANXIOUS
BURNED OUT
CRANKY
DEPLETED
EDGY
EXHAUSTED
FRAZZLED
OVERWHELM
RATTLED
REJECTING
RESTLESS
SHAKEN
TIGHT
WEARY
WORN OUT

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BODY SENSATIONS

ACHY
AIRY
BLOCKED
BREATHLESS
BRUISED
BURNING
BUZZY
CLAMMY
CLENCHED
COLD
CONSTRICTED
CONTAINED
CONTRACTED
DIZZY
DRAINED
DULL
ELECTRIC
EMPTY
EXPANDED
FLOWING
FLUID
FLUTTERY
FROZEN
FULL

GENTLE
HARD
HEAVY
HOLLOW
HOT
ICY
ITCHY
JUMPY
KNOTTED
LIGHT
LOOSE
NAUSEOUS
NUMB
PAIN
POUNDING
PRICKLY
PULSING
QUEASY
RADIATING
RELAXED
RELEASING
RIGID
SENSITIVE
SETTLED



SHAKY
SHIVERY
SLOW
SMOOTH
SOFT
SORE
SPACEY
SPACIOUS
SPARKLY
STIFF
STILL
SUFFOCATED
SWEATY
TENDER
TENSE
THROBBING
TIGHT
TINGLING
TREMBLY
TWITCHY
VIBRATING
WARM
WOBBLY
WOODEN

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RESOURCES



1.Griefshare: A GriefShare support group is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 13-week group, you'll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what's "normal" in grief. Since there are no neat, orderly stages of grief, you'll learn helpful ways of coping with grief, in all its unpredictability–and gain solid support each step of the way.

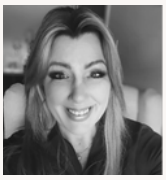
2. Stephen Ministries: *Journeying through Grief*
A Simple, Powerful Way to Care for People Who Are Grieving
Journeying through Grief is a set of four short books to send to people at four crucial times during the first year after the loss of a loved one. Author Kenneth C. Haugk writes in a warm, caring style, with short, easy-to-read chapters. He walks alongside the reader through the grief journey, sharing helpful insights about grief, biblical truths, and stories that provide comfort and reassurance.

3. **Final Gifts, book:** *Final Gifts: Understanding the Special Awareness, Needs, and Communications of the Dying*. In this moving and compassionate classic–now updated with new material from the authors–hospice nurses Maggie Callanan and Patricia Kelley share their intimate experiences with patients at the end of life, drawn from more than twenty years' experience tending the terminally ill.

4. **Safely Home, book:** A novel from Randy Alcorn, the author of Heaven, drawing the reader into the story of heaven and earth through fictional characters led by Biblical principles.

5. **Article: Grief is not the Enemy of Faith** - The Gospel Coalition

6. **Article: Good Grief: A Process of Emotional Healing** - Soul Shepherding



Pamela Nelson: Pamela is an Ordained Pastor, Biblical Counselor, Sr. Spiritual Director, Leadership and Life Coach, Author, Speaker and Podcaster.

Through curiosity and active listening, Pamela is honored to accompany others on their journey of personal growth and healing. Together they establish healthy rhythms to transform their relational, physical, spiritual, financial and vocational lives.