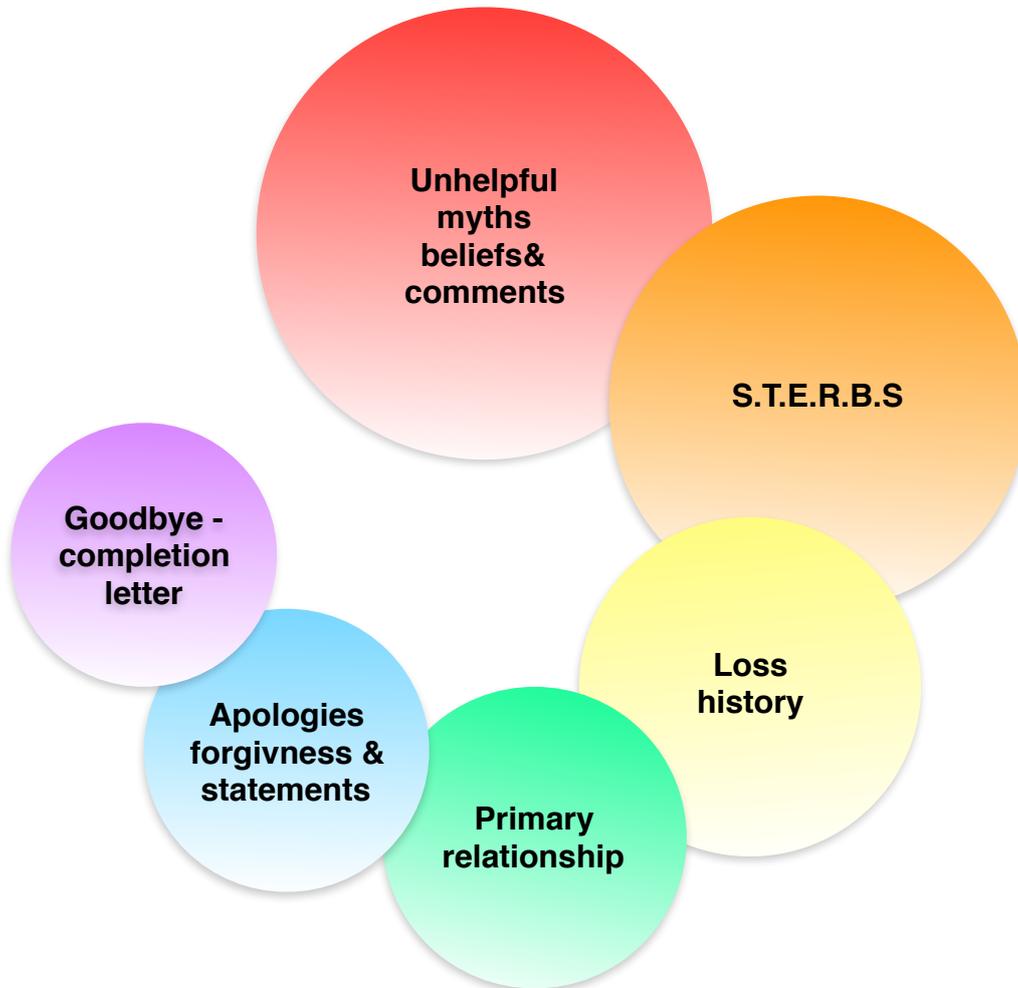




The Grief Recovery Method[®]

by The Grief Recovery Institute[®]

The action plan for regaining your sense of well being after experiencing loss.



- Grief:** conflicting feelings caused by the end of, or change in, a familiar pattern of behaviour.
- Recovery:** finding new meaning for living, without the fear of being hurt again.
- Myths:** a widely held but false belief or idea.
- S.T.E.R.B.S:** Short Term Energy Relieving Behaviours which are used to try and deal with the feelings created by unresolved grief.
- Unresolved:** grief often caused by those things left unsaid, either about what you appreciated in the relationship, or would have wanted to be different, better or more.
- Forgiveness:** giving up the hope of a different or better yesterday. An action not a feeling.

What is grief?

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to significant emotional loss of any kind.

Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of, or change in, a familiar pattern of behaviour.

Grief is the feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there, only to find when you need them one more time, they are no longer there.

Typical responses associated with grief:

Reduced concentration

A sense of numbness

Disrupted sleeping patterns

Changed eating habits

Roller coaster of emotional energy

A lasting feeling of unfairness or anger, sometimes directed towards others who are symbolic of the loss.

Loneliness

Suicidal thoughts

There are over 43 losses that are considered to invoke grief. Some examples:

Death

Divorce / separation

Losing or moving home / school

Personal ill health

Financial hardship

Mental ill health / addiction in family

Being bullied

School exclusion

Suffering / being exposed to violence

Experiencing betrayal

Problems with the law

Separated parent remarrying

Some examples of intangible losses that lead to grief:

Loss of trust

Loss of safety

Loss of innocence

Loss of faith

Loss of control

Loss of childhood

Loss of fertility

Loss of opportunity

Loss of self belief

What is unresolved grief?

There are no universal reactions, it is normal, natural and unique. It is not a pathological condition nor a personality disorder. So how would I know if I, or someone I know, is incomplete with a loss?

If you are unwilling to think about or talk about someone who has died or express feelings about any other losses.

If fond memories turn painful, you may be experiencing unresolved grief.

If you want only to talk about the positive aspects of the relationship, or just the negative aspects, you may be incomplete.

Unresolved grief may be at the root of any fear associated with the thoughts or feelings about a relationship.

The impact of unresolved grief in society:

We know that a great number of people suffer loss in our society, 1 in 4 children grow up in single parent households and there are over half a million deaths in the UK each year, but do we know the true impact of unresolved grief?

Grief is often mislabelled as ADHD, Depression, PTSD and many other pathological conditions which are treated with medication, making recovery more difficult. Because grief is so unique it is expressed in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways; some people may be angry and seek recompense, or justice. Others may withdraw, seeing no hope or future for themselves or those they love. Some people use their grief to campaign, to champion a cause, to create change, others to seek revenge. It will come as no surprise that bereaved young people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system.

Grief affects individuals, families and communities. The New Cross Fire¹, and the deaths of Stephen Lawrence², Jimmy Mizen³, Mark Duggan⁴, Shaquan Fearon⁵ and Myron Yarde⁶ are a few examples which have had lasting impact on their communities and beyond. Unresolved grief is cumulative and cumulatively negative. Although grief itself, especially when public, can drive people to ensure that their personal tragedy is not in vain, unresolved grief can be corrosive and create lasting depression, anger or fear within individuals and communities. For example, research into 2 mass shootings in the USA found that 10 - 15% of the local community were diagnosed with PTSD.

An incomplete past may doom the future.

We find that many people alter life choices after a series of unresolved losses. This is done to protect themselves from further heartbreak. Usually this translates to living a guarded life and a reluctance to participate fully in relationships or new endeavours.

Grief is not clinical depression

A study of 8800 US mental health clients established that a large percentage of people diagnosed as depressed and placed on anti-depressant drugs are not clinically depressed. They are actually experiencing unresolved grief due to prior losses in their lives. There are similar symptoms in grief as to depression: difficulty concentrating, roller coaster of emotions, sense of numbness, disrupted sleeping patterns, altered eating habits and massive loss of energy.

¹ 18 January 1981, 14 victims inc. 1 suicide 2 years later. Catalyst of Brixton riots April 1981

² 22 April 1993, Eltham

³ 10 May 2008, Lee Green

⁴ 6 August 2011, Tottenham, lead (in part) to riots across 12 London boroughs, inc. Lewisham and beyond London.

⁵ 3 September 2015, Brockley

⁶ 4 April 2016, New Cross

Grief does not have stages

There are no stages. Grief cannot be neatly categorised. Elizabeth Kubler Ross' work was on Death & Dying not grief. She is very specific about this distinction in her books and yet the media and the universities have attached her work to grief. This common misinformation has confused and hurt many grievers throughout the years.

Short Term Energy Relieving Behaviours

Many people in our society use what we call "STERBS" or Short Term Energy Relieving Behaviours in an attempt to cover the feelings created by unresolved grief. Some examples of these behaviours would be drinking, over/under eating, gambling, smoking, over/under exercising, cleaning and many more.

Myths & misinformation

Time Heals.

Time does not heal. Time is an abstract concept – a unit of measurement that has no healing power. We know people who have waited 10, 30 or 40 or more years to feel better. However actions taken over time can heal.

Grieve Alone.

Often this advice is subtly implied "just give her some space" or "he needs a few minutes alone in the other room". As children we learn that this means sad feelings should be hidden or experienced alone.

Be strong

Usually the griever is asked to be strong for others. "You have to be strong for your wife/ Mum/children"

Don't feel sad.

This is usually followed by an intellectually true statement that is emotionally useless to the griever. "Don't feel sad, his suffering is over" or "Don't cry, at least you had him for 20 years"

Replace the loss

This is really common with pet loss or the end of a romantic relationship. "We'll get you a new dog" or "there's plenty more fish in the sea"

Keep busy

"If I just keep busy I won't have to think about the loss" This one is sad because some people spend their whole lives with this mentality and never get the chance to grieve and complete what was unfinished with the particular loss.

Common complaints expressed by grievors

A survey asked grievors to decide which comments were helpful following a loss. Out of 141 comments only 19 were helpful. Here are some of the comments that were not helpful:

I know how you feel

You'll be fine in time

You shouldn't be feeling that way still

Look on the bright side at least they're in a better place.

Don't feel bad his suffering is over

Don't be angry with God

You're young you can still have other children

It was just a dog/cat/bird etc

Helpful things to say to someone grieving a loss:

I can't imagine how you feel

I can't imagine how painful/devastating/heart-breaking this has been for you

There are no words, I don't know what to say.

Do listen with your heart, not your head. Allow them to express emotions with no judgment, criticism analysis or comparison.

Do ask "what happened?" in order to give them the chance to talk. Most people will avoid this question. Do not be tempted to try to fix them – simply listen. Do go out of your way to talk to them. Grievors often feel isolated as people avoid them for fear of saying the wrong thing so they end up very alone.

Stay in the moment – to do this you may find it helpful to follow the words in your head. If your mind wanders they will know and you will have become unsafe.

Be empathetic. This means that if you tear up during their story let that be ok.

You're allowed to be a human being while listening to another human being.

The G word – Guilty.

This might help you as the word "guilty" is often used incorrectly:

Mother: My son died alone, I feel so guilty.

Facilitator: Did you ever do anything with intent to harm your son?

Mother: No, of course not (This is an almost universal response)

Facilitator: The dictionary definition of guilt is “intent to harm” and you didn’t do that. You are devastated enough by his death, please don’t add to it with an incorrect word that distorts your feelings. Would it be more accurate to say there are things you wish had been different, or better or that you’d done more of?

Mother: Oh yes!

What does Recovery mean?

Recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever. Sadly most of us have not been given the necessary information with which to make correct choices in response to a loss.

Recovery means feeling better.

Recovery is finding new meaning for living, without the fear of being hurt again.

Recovery is being able to enjoy fond memories without having them turn painful.

Recovery is acknowledging that it is perfectly alright to feel sad from time to time and to talk about those feelings no matter how those around you react.

Recovery means acquiring the skills we should have been taught as a child. These skills allow us to deal with loss directly.

Recovering from significant emotional loss is not an easy task. Taking the actions that lead to recovery will require your open mindedness, willingness and courage.



Services available for Lewisham carers and family members:

Zanne Findlay, a Certified Grief Recovery Specialist and external consultant with Carers Lewisham, can provide:

- Grief recovery groups:** A weekly programme of 2 hours for 8 sessions.
- One-to-one sessions:** A weekly programme of 7 sessions, up to 90 minutes.

Courses for professionals:

- Helping Children Grieve** A weekly programme of 6 sessions of 2 hours.

For more information email: zannefin@me.com or text Zanne on 07710 416 229

Funding is currently being sought to provide these services free of charge.

Contact details for Carers Lewisham:

Carers Lewisham, Lewisham Carers Centre, Waldram Place, Forest Hill, London SE23 2LB
Tel: 020 8699 8686 email: info@carerslewisham.org.uk web: www.carerslewisham.org.uk

