

# the guide to understanding grief in adults

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# introduction

“**I**n 1969, iconic psychiatrist and hospice pioneer Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, published her now famous book, *On Death and Dying*. In it, she described “The Five Stages” which discussed how individuals may grieve while dying.

Whether you ascribe to her findings or not, one thing is evident: healing from loss is more of a journey than an event. It takes time to adapt to the pain of loss, regardless of cause. However, the entire process of living while grieving does not have to be painful as there is much hope, wisdom and love to be garnered along the way.

In this guide, we’ll take a look at the basic concepts of grief and also some tips to help you adapt to a life that now includes healing from loss. Whether you lost a spouse, child, pet or colleague, grief is one of the most painful life experiences we all go through. However, it can ultimately become one of the most rewarding processes, as we learn we are by far stronger than we ever imagined possible.

Remember, healing grief is not a straight upward path. Throughout your journey, you may feel emotionally strong and truly vulnerable, sometimes both in the

same day! So with that in mind, try to be gentle with yourself, much as you would a friend or family member who was suffering. The people around you are counting on you—which means you have to take good care of yourself, too.

In closing, while this guide is meant to share insight into the grief journey, remember that

professional grief counselors, psychologists, chaplains, and other community members are there to help you, too. Reach out to them when you can. Rabbi Earl Grollman said it best, “Grief shared is grief diminished.” There’s no need to go it alone.

We hope you find this guide helpful as you journey forward.

# why the need to understand grief? because we're all connected

by Dianne Gray

In 2013, there were over 2.5 million deaths in the US alone, which means we're a country filled with millions of grieving people all interacting with each other, as no one is born or lives in a silo on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, even if you're not the one who has endured a loss, chances are you live or work with someone who has, which leads one to ask: "Why haven't we been taught more about grief and grieving in the past?"

The time to start understanding more about grief is NOW.

**According to Centers for Disease Control (CDC) statistics, over 2.5 million people died in the US in 2013:**

Number of deaths: 2,596,993

Death rate: 821.5 deaths per 100,000 population

Life expectancy: 78.8 years

Infant Mortality rate: 5.96 deaths per 1,000 live births

**The CDC then shared this 2014 data that reflects the breakdown by cause of death:**

Heart disease: 614,348

Cancer: 591,699

Chronic lower respiratory diseases: 147,101

Accidents (unintentional injuries): 136,053

Stroke (cerebrovascular diseases): 133,103

Alzheimer's disease: 93,541

Diabetes: 76,488

Influenza and Pneumonia: 55,227

Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis: 48,146

Intentional self-harm (suicide): 42,773

Resource: The Centers For Disease Control (CDC) <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm>

# things to remember while living with grief

by Dianne Gray

**All who love, grieve** and that includes human beings of all ages (even babies) and animals.

**Grief has no timeline.** This means that though your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors may plead with you to just “get over it,” you are own your own timeline when it comes to healing grief. If you’re living with someone who is grieving, he or she will heal in their own time. It’s not going to be easy and at times it will be downright difficult, but it helps to know that you’re looking

at a grief journey, not a grief event.

**Each person’s grief journey is as individual as his or her DNA.**

Even people who are biologically related grieve differently. As well, people with the same “type” of loss (loss of a mother, loss of a child, loss of a spouse) will grieve differently though they may feel empathy and compassion for each other based on understanding of the unique type of loss.



**Many people are helped by sharing their feelings of grief with friends, family, neighbors, colleagues or community members.** Why? Because in sharing our pain, we release feelings of sadness, guilt, profound loss while simultaneously building bonds of friendship and love.

**Take care of your physical health while grieving.** Researchers are proving more and more that there is a link to emotional wellbeing and physical wellness. Exercise and nutrition are important components to your grieving process.

**Your groups of friends may change.** Why? Because not all people know how to be a good friend throughout one's grief journey. However, it's important to remember that just because they don't understand your grief, it doesn't mean you are not loved.

**You will most likely be surprised (in the nicest way) on occasion.** Really! There will be people who show up in your life unexpectedly—and believe it or not, they may not only understand this phase of your life, they may truly come to you in the hours of your deepest grief—even though they hardly know you. This is not strange. It is just a sign that you've encountered true empathy and compassion. Enjoy the gift!

**The first year of grief is the hardest.** Nearly every grieving person believes this to be true early on in the grief process. Then they hit the second anniversary of their beloved's passing and are often shocked that they feel horribly sad and in fact, possibly more sad than they did the first year. Why is this? Because grieving often gets harder before it gets easier.

**The only way to heal is by going through your grief, not around it.**

While grieving, many people overeat, overdrink and indulge in activities they would never have considered before. Why? Because many think that if they numb the pain, it will be gone when they stop doing whatever activity or come off of whatever “high” they were on. The grieving who participate in the above activities are then usually surprised that sadly, not only is the loss and pain of grief still there—but now everything feels worse because of the physical or emotional discomfort caused by whatever they thought would help.

**You will not always feel this bad.**

Really. Though it may seem an impossibility, there really will come a day when you will most likely look upon this time as if looking through a kaleidoscope. You’ll reflect upon all of the activity, the up-and-down emotions, the sadness and the small successes when you first remembered to smile, then laugh – and you won’t believe the growth you’ve encountered. It will take time though...probably more than you want and less than you imagine.

# the grief glossary: terms you may hear throughout your journey

by Dianne Gray

While it is not our goal to label you or your grief, it is helpful to understand what you may be going through so you can look for information on your own. Here are a few common terms that may help you understand either yourself or your loved one throughout your grief journey:

**Ambiguous Grief** means that one cannot fully grieve the loss because the loss is hard to define. For example, if one is sad because a celebrity dies, and one does not know this person, the grief can feel ambiguous and it's hard to pin

down why the grieving individual feels so sad.

**Absent Grief** occurs when the bereaved person shows no outward sign of grief whatsoever. In fact, they may act as though nothing ever happened. Absent grief can include denial or shock and can occur in combination with sudden loss. As well, it can occur when someone feels their grief is not justified. For example, many people grieve deeply over the loss of a pet, and they don't know if it's societally acceptable to feel the way they do. It's also important

to remember, that grief is as individual as our DNA – and just because it looks like someone is not grieving, he or she may be profoundly saddened by the loss of a loved one.

**Anticipatory Grief** refers to a grief reaction that occurs before an impending loss. Typically, the impending loss is the anticipated death of someone close due to illness, but anticipatory loss can also be experienced by dying individuals themselves. It can also refer to the increase in grief/anxiety in anticipation of the anniversary of a death or the anniversary of a loved one's birthday following his or her passing.

**Chronic Grief** is believed to occur when a person has strong grief reactions that continue over a long period of time, with seemingly little or no progress in healing or moving forward in your grief journey.

**Complicated Grief** is sometimes called persistent complex bereavement disorder. In complicated grief, painful emotions are so long lasting and severe that one can have trouble accepting the loss and resuming your own life. Some people believe that complicated grief occurs when normal grief symptoms combine with depression and/or anxiety.

**Cumulative Grief** is when one experiences a second loss while still mourning the first loss. Life itself can seem hard to manage and people can feel completely overwhelmed by loss(es).

**Delayed Grief** can occur when the grieving person feels that there is simply no time to be sad. For example, if there is a death and the grieving individual feels he or she needs to pack up the house or get through an event, grief can be put on the “back burner” theoretically. However, be aware, the emotions of grief—such as

deep sadness – can burst forth in a most unexpected time afterward. The grief is still there, even though it seems it may not be.

**Disenfranchised Grief** occurs when a group, organization or person makes the grieving individual feel as if the loss that is being experienced is invalid or insignificant. Examples of disenfranchised grief are: in the event of an ex-spouse, co-worker or celebrity; when the death is surrounded by stigma (suicide, drunk driving, drug overdose); or if the loss is “invisible” (miscarriage or doesn’t result in death (loss of identity through stroke, dementia, etc.)

**Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** is a mental health condition that’s triggered by either experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event in which physical harm occurred or was threatened. PTSD often has long lasting consequences and can cause

one to feel intense fear, profound anxiety, guilt, nervousness and more. Symptoms may include flashbacks and nightmares. Some people with PTSD may have uncontrollable thoughts about the event such as war, natural disaster, or traumatic event.

Families of victims, emergency personnel and rescue workers can also suffer from PTSD. It’s important to note though, that some reactions associated with PTSD occur as part of a normal grief process and they may go away over time. However, people with PTSD report that the feelings can become progressively worse and can become debilitating, preventing the person from living a normal life. If you or someone you know suspects you may have PTSD, please reach out to a professional grief counselor or psychologist trained in PTSD. Every year, many people learn to cope with the symptoms of PTSD with the help of a counselor.

**Prolonged Grief Disorder** is defined by its symptoms, duration and intensity. The symptoms are intense yearning for the person, identity confusion, difficulty accepting the loss, bitterness, emotional numbness, inability to trust others and the feeling of being trapped in grief. These are present every day, causing significant distress and functional impairment, and remain intense, frequent, and disabling for six months or more after the death.

**Unresolved Grief** occurs when a string of losses have not been processed. Harboring unresolved grief can result in feelings of anger and resentment, which can then evolve into unhealthy relationships.

In closing, the different terms are listed so you can understand yourself better. They are not outlined in order to medicalize your grief journey. When you reach out to a grief or bereavement counselor for guidance, it may help both of you to understand what you may be feeling.

# coping with traumatic loss

*by Dianne Gray*

While grief may be universal, traumatic loss has several unique factors that come with it. It is important to understand that no guide, including this one, can ever provide all information needed to understand every manifestation of traumatic loss.

Our goal here is to provide you with a framework to start from – so you and those in your midst understand some of the basics of traumatic loss. It's our hope that you and/or someone you love will then seek out the guidance and support you need.

First, it helps to understand what traumatic loss is. While there may be many definitions that are specific in nature, we are going to stay with the broadest, most general description: A traumatic loss is one that occurs because someone you love or care for dies without anticipation or forewarning.

**It may involve:**

- Violence
- Suicide
- Homicide
- Harm to your loved one's body
- Death that was accidental or preventable
- Suffering
- Multiple deaths or death that was part of a mass event

**Traumatic loss may also involve:**

Medical events such as heart attack, stroke, aneurysm, post-operative complication, anaphylactic shock (bee sting, severe allergy), sudden infant death syndrome, and/or any medical event in which your loved one died suddenly or anything that causes the sudden death of someone you care for.

OR

Non-medical events which cause death by terrorist attacks, murder, gunshot, suicide, car accident, and other causes of accidental death, which include random events, and events where you had to identify the victim.

**Sudden death can leave surviving friends and family feeling:**

- Unstable
- Shaken
- Vulnerable
- Anxious
- Numb



- Fearful
- Shameful
- Burdened
- Unsafe
- In shock and denial
- Guilt
- Deeply angry

**Some physical manifestations caused by coping with traumatic loss:**

- Headaches
- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite changes
- Nausea
- Muscle aches
- Exhaustion
- Digestive issues

In the event of traumatic loss it is also common to experience bouts of:

- Memory loss and forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Flashbacks
- Difficulty in problem solving
- Difficulty concentrating

**Here's what doesn't help one to heal from traumatic loss:**

- Abusing alcohol
- Abusing medications
- Unprotected sex
- Overeating
- Refusing counseling

### **Here's what can help you cope with traumatic loss:**

First and foremost, it helps to get and stick with, grief and bereavement counseling from someone who specializes in PTSD and traumatic loss. This person can truly help you through the darkest days of coping with sudden or traumatic loss

### **Also it helps to:**

- Keep a normal routine as much as possible, especially in the first few weeks
- Sleep and as well, rest
- Drink a lot of water. Staying hydrated helps to reduce stress on your body
- Make yourself lists and notes of appointments. It is not uncommon to become forgetful in the weeks following a traumatic loss
- Exercise daily, if possible. It helps to relieve stress
- Yoga. It helps to reduce tension and stress
- Eat healthy foods
- Pray and meditate
- Try getting a massage, if possible
- When you feel stressed, see if it helps to you be in or around the water. Science shows this may help to release tension

### **It's also helpful to:**

- Participate in art, music, or dance when possible as each can have a helpful, therapeutic effect
- Seek out clergy and your church community, as they can also be of help
- Spending time with friends is also of tremendous benefit, as maintaining one's social circle can help to alleviate stress. However,

there will be people who don't know what to say to you. This is common. Give it time. People will adapt and if they don't, then you typically have a choice as to who to spend time with.

In closing, if you are coping with traumatic loss, please be gentle and kind to yourself. You CAN heal and you have a role to play in that process. However, it is going to take time.

# common physical manifestations of grief

*by* Dianne Gray

You've lost someone you love and suddenly you feel nauseous, your head is spinning and maybe you feel achy – almost like you have the flu. What's going on?

By all means, go to the doctor and get checked out because maybe you did catch a cold or the flu. Emotional stress can indeed impact one's immune system.

However, if the physician says you're physically healthy, you may wish to look at your grief as the source of your physical malaise.

**Here are a few, though not all, of the physical symptoms often associated with grief:**

- Headache
- Digestive issues including bowel issues
- Aching joints or muscles

- Vision difficulty
- Ringing of the ears
- Tightness of chest or throat
- Inability to sleep or wanting to sleep a lot
- Irritability or overall crankiness
- Crying and even sobbing
- Weight gain or weight loss
- Change in appetite
- Inability to concentrate
- Change in food likes and dislikes
- Shortness of breath

In general, when in doubt, please call your physician immediately. It's always good to have a professional opinion.

# what can help you feel better sooner rather than later

by Dianne Gray

Try to eat healthy foods. This may seem like common sense, but you'd be surprised how many people reach for sugary, fat-filled snacks to ease their sense of sadness. The problem is that it doesn't help in the long term. In fact, when the buzz from eating the sugar wears off, you may feel worse and who needs that?

What healthy foods to eat: green leafy vegetables, fruit, lean meats and whole grains if you wish.

Drink a lot of water. It truly helps the body to cleanse itself of toxins.

Exercise. Ask your doctor first. Then build up slowly to 30 minutes if you can't make it that far in the beginning. It's a guaranteed stress reliever. Take a walk, ride your bike, do yoga. The key is to get moving.

Get outdoors. It will help your overall frame of mind and will relieve stress.

Look for a good grief counselor and go! Also, stay consistent in your visits because it takes time to heal from grief.

Pray or meditate. Many report that prayer and/or meditation has helped them to handle the profound sadness that accompanies grief.

Go out with friends. Social interaction can be truly beneficial if you're with people who support you.

Call a time out on friendships that are draining. Notice we didn't suggest you end those friendships. Why? Because chances are your friend may not know how to deal with your grief and therefore, the stress level is high for each of you.

# what doesn't help you to feel better while grieving (even though you think it might)

by Dianne Gray

While some of these suggestions may seem common sense to you, it's amazing what the mind forgets and the heart overrules, while deep in the muck of grief.

We hope you'll consider the following information our way of gently nudging you to take care of yourself throughout your grief journey.

## What Doesn't Help Grieving People

**Excessive Alcohol:** Grief and alcohol are a slippery slope for some people.

What does this mean? It means that for some, one drink a night can turn into two, can turn into three, and so on. As well, alcohol is a depressant, meaning that it can make people feel more



depressed/sad/unhappy, not less. So if you're looking to feel better because you're grieving, not worse, consider bypassing it altogether or keeping the intake of alcoholic drinks to a minimum.

**Overeating:** Plain and simple... eating too much food gives people a stomachache. Add in the digestive issues that often occur due to the stress and emotional upset caused by grief and you have a recipe for discomfort. If you want to feel better, not worse, eat sensibly. In fact, try eating smaller meals while you're in the initial stages of grief. Many people truly have digestive issues at the onset of grief and loss and this may help!

**Skipping Exercise:** The fact of the matter is that many people feel they are simply too sad to move a single muscle, much less move an entire body full of muscles to do some exercise. This is completely understandable. However, research shows

that following heart-pounding exercise, the body creates chemicals in the body that simply makes us feel happier.

**Too Much Sugar:** You probably already know that too much sugar via donuts, cakes, pies, cookies or in your coffee is not going to make you feel happier following the loss of your loved one. In fact, it may make you feel worse once your blood sugar comes down. Moderation is the key.

**Moving/Buying/Selling Property:** While sometimes you have no choice as to making a move or the buying and selling of property, it's best to wait.

Why is this not a good idea? Grieving is hard work and you deserve the chance to rest as much as possible in the early stages of grief. Also, you may make a decision you'll regret.

# what grief isn't

by Dianne Gray

**Grief is not an excuse to be unkind to your friends, neighbors, grocery store check out person and other strangers or colleagues.** If they know you, they know you're going through a tough time. If they don't know you, you may be emitting energy or a vibe that tells them something is wrong. Remember though, that they are most likely coping with their own issues, too. You just may not know about them and if you did, you may be shocked at the fact that they showed up for work at all. We're all coping with something and sometimes those that hurt the most say the least.

**Grief is not an excuse to be unkind to your spouse, significant other, kids or other family members.** As above,

they probably know of your grief and maybe he or she is going through the grief process, too. Everyone gets stressed and fed up with those in their sphere while grieving. It's normal. The difference though is how you deal with it. If you can't help but feel irritated by someone in your house or in your family, try writing a letter rather than letting hurtful words fly out of your mouth. If that doesn't work for you, try exercising or going outdoors, then coming back to talk about it. You may be thankful just a short time later.

**The grief journey is not the time to beat yourself up emotionally.** Everyone has things they wish they did better. Many grieving people look back upon the end of life process or the hours before a

tragedy and chastise themselves that they could or should have done something differently. By and large, most people try to do the best they can in a day... and this includes you. Park the damaging self-talk and try to speak more nicely about yourself!

**Grief isn't a disease or a mental disorder.** While thousands seek grief counseling as part of a healthy, healing process, the act of grieving does not mean you are mentally ill. However, when in doubt, go see a bereavement counselor, a psychologist who specializes in grief or other practitioner who can do an assessment. He or she may help you tremendously.

**While first grieving, it's not usually a good time to create sudden lifestyle changes.** Though many do it, many also regret doing it —especially if it involves getting rid of the loved one's clothes and momentos. Go slowly and thoughtfully while contemplating big changes such as moving, job changes or other lifestyle changes. You'll be glad you did.

# men & grief

by Dianne Gray

One of the most frequent questions asked of bereavement professionals has to do with the maintenance of partnerships throughout the grief journey. The questions involving relationships and grief sound a little like this:

She says: “Why doesn’t he talk to me?”

He says: “Why does she talk SO much about the death of our mother/father/child?”

She says: “He just goes to work and stays there so late these days. Why?”

He says: “She just want me to talk about my feelings all the time. I don’t want to!”

She says: “I want him to just hold me while I cry.”

He says: “I don’t know what to do to help her while she cries and cries.”

Notice any differences there?

While all human beings grieve because they love, they do indeed grieve differently. In fact, men and women can have very different approaches to how they grieve and mourn.

How so? It’s common for men to turn inward when they grieve, whereas women may turn to their friendships with other women in order to commence their grief journey.

Men may attempt to distract themselves by increasing their workload or their participation in sports or other recreational activities. Men may also use anger and aggression as a mask for feelings of profound grief since many cultures have an expectation that men are the

“stronger” gender. However, it’s important to understand that a lack of tears in men does not indicate a lack of deep sadness. Also, a lack of verbal communication does not in any way mean that the man in your life lacks caring and compassion.

Men just often feel they are the “fixers” in life and death is one thing that cannot be “fixed.” Nor can grief. So what do we do about it?

First, we can all acknowledge the differences in grief style within genders, within cultures, and most important, within each and every one of us as individuals.

Also, to help the man in your life through his grief process, here are a few suggestions:

Suggest you spend time together playing a sport or doing a recreational activity.

Many men find it easier to talk

while participating in a sport of some sort.

If you don’t play a sport, try something as easy as taking a walk or spending time together in nature.

Also, many men like to work in the yard or garden, cook, or repair things around the house, and they do indeed, like to watch sports on television. These are all viable opportunities to just “be” in shared space with the man in your life. When he is ready to open up, he will. Until then, know that it may help him for you to just be by his side, without asking questions about his emotions. Silence can be a valuable healing tool at times. Most people truly open up when they’re ready.

Also, understand that many men are seen as “protectors” in various cultures. Since death cannot be prevented in many cases, it can cause men to feel as though they were not doing their

“job,” even though death is very much a part of life, regardless of cause. Therefore, understand this and assure the man in your life that death happens to each and every individual and if at possible, assure him that he was not at fault for the death of his loved one. This may seem common sense to you, but you’d be amazed how much hearing it from you may help.

Men are great doers. This means that if you’d like to start a program to honor his beloved, be sure to involve the man in your life. He may not love the idea at first, but many men, are truly great program builders. Consider scholarships, a program, or a project that honors his beloved.

When in doubt, seek guidance from a counselor, chaplain, or psychologist. The man in your life (father, husband, life partner, or brother, for example) may not want to go together. If that’s the case, you go! Why? It’ll benefit the two of you if you learn new ways to communicate with him—which ultimately may help each of you in your overall grief and subsequent life journey.

# grief and the holidays

by Dianne Gray

Regardless of which holiday you celebrate, the holiday season can be a tough time for families of all shapes and sizes following the death of someone they love. Why? Because holidays are often about ritual and tradition and conversely, grief and loss often mean changes in family structure and routine. Add to the equation heightened emotions, and the fact that people process loss in different ways and at a different pace, and it becomes easy to see why the holidays can be fraught with intense, sometimes irrational conversation.

However, it doesn't have to be this way! It is also completely possible to honor the person who

has passed by including him or her in some way throughout the holiday season.

Here are a few basic guidelines for helping you get through the holidays:

**Recognize that it's okay to want to "sit out" this year.** Many grieving people feel strongly that they don't want to participate in a holiday following the passing of a loved one. This is completely normal and understandable. However, know that your entire family may not feel that way. It's helpful to allow every person emotional space as he or she navigates individual feelings on this topic.

**Understand that what you or anyone else feels today, you may not feel tomorrow.** The holidays often include demands on schedules, finances, and emotions. It is normal to feel stressed when you feel emotionally stretched. However, once you get some sleep you may change your mind again and may wish to participate in whatever event you declined just the day before. Everyone in your family may feel the same way. Therefore, it may be helpful to encourage flexibility in everyone—especially in the first or second year of grief following the loss of your loved one.

**Plan a moment to honor the one you have lost.** It may help you to cope with feelings of guilt or separation while celebrating the holidays without your loved one by your side.

**Bring out your loved one's favorite ornaments if you wish.** The other members of your family

may each have a different opinion on this topic. However, in the end, most people feel better by having some sort of recognition of their loved one visible during the holiday—even if the cause for loss was something that brought shame or stigma into the household.

**Get as much sleep as your body demands.** Grieving is hard work emotionally and physically. If your body craves sleep during the holidays, try taking naps here and there—for at least 20-30 minutes but not so long that they make you more tired when you wake up.

**Keep your alcohol intake to a minimum.** While you may wish to numb your feelings of grief during the holidays, drinking too much will only make you feel worse that evening and the next day. As well, alcohol is a depressant, which only makes you feel more sad.



**Remember there is no right or wrong to getting through the holidays following the loss of a loved one.** Each holiday will be unique and most people do create a “new normal” even if they liked the way it was before the death of their loved one.

**There will be people you’ll find it comfortable to be with – and they may not be the ones you usually spend time with.** Not all people are comfortable being around the grieving. It’s okay. It really helps to maintain a level of understanding and compassion for all—including yourself.

In closing, remember that while the holidays are a special time, they are also just one special part of a year. Please be gentle with yourself as you navigate any holiday following the loss of your loved one and remember, it’s always a good idea to reach out to a grief and bereavement counselor if you feel you need to. They’re there to help you.

# books to help you heal your grief

**A Grief Observed** by C.S. Lewis

**After Suicide** by John H. Hewett

**Beyond Tears: Living After**

**Losing a Child** by nine mothers  
who have lost a child

**Empty Cradle, Broken Heart** by  
Deborah L. Davis

**For the Tough Times** by Max  
Lucado

**Healing a Parent's Grieving  
Heart** by Alan D. Wolfelt

**Healing a Spouse's Grieving  
Heart** by Alan D. Wolfelt

**Healing After Loss: Daily  
Meditations for Working Through  
Grief** by Martha Hickman

**How to Go On Living When  
Someone You Love Dies** by  
Therese Rando, Ph.D.

**How to Survive The Loss of a  
Love** by Harold H. Bloomfield

**I Wasn't Ready to Say Goodbye,  
Surviving Coping and Healing  
the Sudden Death of a Living  
When a Loved One Has Died** by  
Earl Grollman

**Loved One** by Brook Noel and  
Pamela Blair, Ph.D.

**Motherless Daughters** by Hope  
Edelman

**No Time To Say Goodbye,  
Surviving the Suicide of a Loved  
One** by Carla Fine

**On Grief and Grieving** by  
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David  
Kessler

**On Grieving the Death of a  
Father** by Harold Ivan Smith

**Safe Passage: Words To Help  
The Grieving Hold Fast and Let  
Go** by Molly Fumia

**The Complete C.S. Lewis  
Signature Classics** by C.S. Lewis

**The Orphaned Adult** by  
Alexander Levy

**The Year of Magical Thinking** by  
Joan Didion

**Understanding Your Grief** by  
Alan D. Wolfelt

**When Bad Things Happen To  
Good People** by Rabbi Harold  
Kushner

**When the Bough Breaks, Forever  
After the Death of a Son or  
Daughter** by Judith R. Bernstein,  
Ph.D.

### **In Spanish:**

*\*We wish all of the above books  
were printed in Spanish, but  
they're not. Here are a few for  
you:*

**Cuando a la Gente Buena le  
Pasan Cosas Malas** Harold  
Kushner

**Cuando la Vida te Decepciona**  
Harold Kushner

**El Año del Pensamiento Mágico**  
Joan Didion

**La Muerte Un Amanecer**  
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

**La Rueda de la Vida** Elisabeth  
Kubler-Ross

**Sobre el Duelo y el Dolor**  
Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David  
Kessler

**Una Pena en Observacion** C.S.  
Lewis

**Vivir Cuando un ser Querido ha  
Muerto** Earl Grollman

## **ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP THE GRIEVING**

**AARP:** Formerly the American  
Association of Retired Persons;  
Their website has a lot of grief  
and bereavement content. Some  
content available in Spanish, too.  
[www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org)

**Acts of Simple Kindness (ASK)**  
is a nonprofit that equips children  
with financial grants following  
the loss of one or both parents.  
The idea is to allow children to  
still engage in extracurricular  
activities because after losing  
a parent, it often becomes  
less financially feasible. [www.  
actsofsimplekindness.org](http://www.actsofsimplekindness.org)

lost their only child or multiple children, which has resulted in severe feelings of loneliness and depression. With a regularly updated newsletter, along with books and magazines, viewers can be sure to find the content desired. [www.alivealone.org](http://www.alivealone.org)

**Association for Pet Loss and Bereavement** consists of professionally trained volunteers in pet bereavement counseling. Services are free and available to anyone grieving a beloved pet. The organization incorporates the collective wisdom and experience of all friends and members. [www.aplb.org](http://www.aplb.org)

**Bereaved by Suicide** is an international resource for people coping with suicide loss (and those who want to support them). The bereaved by suicide website offers a place to learn more about suicide grief, suicide bereavement research, and grief programs. [www.bereavedbysuicide.com](http://www.bereavedbysuicide.com)

**The Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation** acts as a resource to individuals and hospice, grief or palliative care organizations globally. The EKR Foundation also participates in initiatives that help to improve the lives of patients and family members via advocacy support, the provision of resources, education initiatives and other projects that promote compassionate end of life and grief care for the patient and family members. [www.ekrfoundation.org](http://www.ekrfoundation.org)

**Golden Willow Retreat** discusses all issues individuals face when coping with loss. Located in Taos, New Mexico, the retreat functions as an outlet for individuals to find the balance needed to get their lives back on track. [www.goldenwillowretreat.com](http://www.goldenwillowretreat.com)

**Grieving Dads Project** is designed to reach out to all bereaved dads in an effort to provide a conduit to share their stories. One of my goals is to

bring awareness to the impacts that child loss has on fathers and to let society know that it's okay for a father to grieve the loss of a child. [www.grieveingdads.com](http://www.grieveingdads.com)

### **Healthcare Chaplaincy Network**

is a nonprofit organization that helps people faced with the distress of illness and suffering to find comfort and meaning. They offer spiritual care-related information and resources, and professional chaplaincy services in hospitals, other health care settings and online. [www.healthcarechaplaincy.org](http://www.healthcarechaplaincy.org)

**Hello Grief** works to help those grieving with the feelings they're experiencing and gain a better understanding of how to address them. The site features community support, sharing and remembering, stories, validation, and more. [www.hellogrief.com](http://www.hellogrief.com)

**Helping After Neonatal Death** helps parents, their families and their healthcare providers cope

with the loss of a baby before, during, or after birth. **HAND** is a resource network of parents, professionals, and supportive volunteers that offers a variety of services throughout Northern California and the Central Valley. There are no fees for our services. [www.hand.org](http://www.hand.org)

**MISS Foundation** helps parents who have experienced the loss of a baby or a child of any age. **MISS** also participates in legislation and advocacy issues and offers support groups in many states. [www.missfoundation.org](http://www.missfoundation.org)

### **The National Alliance for Grieving Children (NAGC)**

promotes awareness of the needs of children and teens grieving a death and provides education and resources for anyone who wants to support them. The **NAGC** provides a network for nationwide communication between bereavement centers and sponsors an annual symposium on children's grief.

Some content for families. [www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org](http://www.nationalallianceforgrievingchildren.org)

**The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO)** represents hospice and palliative care programs and professionals in the United States. The organization is committed to improving end of life care and expanding access to hospice care with the goal of profoundly enhancing quality of life for people dying in America and their loved ones. Also check: [www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org) for consumer and grief content. [www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)

**National Students of AMF** is a network of college students who are grieving the loss of a loved one and seek aid to help get them back on their feet. Their work spreads to over 170 colleges across the country and does a great job at explicating viable solutions for these students. [www.activelymovingforward.org](http://www.activelymovingforward.org)

**The Open To Hope Foundation** provides an online forum to support people who have experienced loss, to help them cope with their pain, heal their grief and invest in their future. [OpentoHope.com](http://OpentoHope.com) is an online website where people can share inspirational stories of loss and love. [www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)

**Project Grace** seeks to create a safe and supportive environment where grieving individuals come together to share, volunteer, and explore. At least two trips are offered each year: one designed exclusively for mothers grieving the loss of a child, and one “open” trip for anyone – mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, spouses, friends – wishing to honor a loved one through service. [www.project-grace.org](http://www.project-grace.org)

**Welcome to Rainbow Bridge**, a virtual memorial home and grief support community for your departed pet. Whether furry, feathered or scaled, all are welcome. [www.rainbowbridge.com](http://www.rainbowbridge.com)

**Resources for Survivors of Suicide** emphasizes that individuals are not alone upon losing a loved one to suicide. With tools specifically geared toward military spouses and interactive online support, they're thorough in the application of grief support. [www.sprc.org](http://www.sprc.org)

**Room 217 Foundation** raises and stewards funds to further music care resources which offer hope and comfort by producing therapeutic music products. They also offer music care education, research and provide a blog: Caregivers Corner. [www.Room217.ca](http://www.Room217.ca)

**SHARE Pregnancy and Infant Loss Support, Inc.** emphasizes a support system for parents who have experienced a tragic loss of a child through pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or within the first few months of being born. They also help facilitate the flow of information to others regarding infant loss. [www.nationalshare.org](http://www.nationalshare.org)

**Sibling Survivors of Suicide** are often called the forgotten mourners, the sibling survivors web site offers a place for those bereaved by suicide to gather and find support for "the forgotten mourners." [www.siblingsurvivors.com](http://www.siblingsurvivors.com)

**Soaring Spirits Loss Foundation** builds community. We create and maintain innovative peer-based grief support programs that serve a worldwide population. We endeavor to ensure that no one need grieve alone. In addition to the unique support programs we offer, Soaring Spirits also houses a large database of resources that provides grief support that addresses various types of loss. [www.soaringspirits.org](http://www.soaringspirits.org)

**The Compassionate Friends** assist families toward the positive resolution of grief following the death of a child of any age and to provide information to help others be supportive. [www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

The mission of **The Dougy Center** is to provide support in a safe place where children, teens, young adults and their families grieving a death can share their experiences. We provide educational materials about children and grief and training opportunities to local and national agencies in need of our expertise. Around the world, The Dougy Center's pioneering model has been replicated through our trainings and the trainings of programs we've trained. The Dougy Center also has programs and content that serve the Hispanic population. [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

The **Grief Toolbox** works to compile useful resources for others to appropriately address the rigors of addressing the loss of a loved one. With varying artwork and articles that provide interesting perspective, it's incredibly worthwhile for those struggling with loss. [www.thegrieftoolbox.com](http://www.thegrieftoolbox.com)

The mission of **The Moyer Foundation** is to offer encouragement, comfort and support to children enduring a time of profound emotional, physical or financial distress and provide opportunities for enhancing overall wellness, stability and quality of life. TMF created and funds Camp Erin, the largest network of bereavement camps in the country. [www.moyerfoundation.org](http://www.moyerfoundation.org)

**Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, Inc. (TAPS)** helps families who have lost a military member. They've assisted over 40,000 family members by providing peer-based emotional support for anyone grieving a military death. [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org)

**Twinless Twins Support Group International** is a support organization that helps twins who have lost their sibling through death or estrangement of any kind. Composed solely of twins who have lost their twin, it



makes a very valuable group for those looking for someone who understands exactly how it feels to lose the person you've grown up with. [www.twinlesstwins.org](http://www.twinlesstwins.org)

**Unspoken Grief** aims to address issues less talked about concerning miscarriages, stillbirths, & neonatal loss. Since these issues often go unrecognized, the site has been crucial in confronting these topics. [www.unspokengrief.com](http://www.unspokengrief.com)

**What's Your Grief** is a website whose is to expand the conversation in order to find innovative new solutions to assisting those in the most need. [www.whatsyourgrief.com](http://www.whatsyourgrief.com)

*This resource list was created and compiled by Dianne Gray of Hospice and Healthcare Communications, LLC. It is provided as a free resource. Hospice and Healthcare Communications does not necessarily recommend the*

*organizations above or the books above. Due to the changes in organizations, the current availability of a program cannot be guaranteed. Please contact the organization directly should you have a question. If you have questions on the content, please contact: [DGray@hhccommunications.com](mailto:DGray@hhccommunications.com).*

*Wishing you wellness and peace on your journey, DG*

# about the author

Dianne Gray is an award winning writer/journalist for over 70 books, magazines, newspapers, blogs and educational projects. She's also a film producer/consultant, international keynote speaker and program builder. In short she's a powerhouse advocate global advocate for improved care for seriously ill, dying and grieving people of all ages. Her motivational keynote talks and inspirational delivery discuss the tough and tender topics involved in the provision of quality end of life and grief care.

Dianne is also President of the Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Foundation, on the board of the International Children's Palliative Care Network and is co-founder of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Section of Hospice and Palliative Medicine's Parent Advisory Group. Over the past twenty years, she has founded four non-profit organizations, each focused on improving life for seriously ill children and their families.

As well, she still sits bedside with as many patients as possible, often acting as a resource for families facing end of life care for their loved ones.

Throughout, Dianne sees her family's ten-year pediatric hospice/palliative care experience with healthy daughter, Christina and her son, Austin (who died in 2005 as a result of a neurodegenerative disorder) as the gift of a lifetime.

As an aside, she has traveled to 17 countries and over 175 cities in the past nine years-- and loves to see who she crosses paths with each and every day!

Contact Dianne Gray at [dgray@hhccommunications.com](mailto:dgray@hhccommunications.com) or follow her on Facebook & Twitter: @diannebgray

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