

Coping with Loss: Bereavement and Grief

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**While you are waiting, please answer the first 3 survey questions.**

**This will help us to address your needs today.**

**Thank you.**

MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR CARE AT HOME SINCE  
1957



Presented by Capitol Nursing  
Education

Speaker: Barbara West RN, MSN,  
WOCN

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## Coping with Loss: Bereavement and Grief

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In our hearts, we all know that death is a part of life. In fact, death gives meaning to our existence because it reminds us how precious life is.

# Coping With Loss

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The loss of a loved one is life's most stressful event and can cause a major emotional crisis. After the death of someone you love, you experience bereavement, which literally means "to be deprived by death."

# Knowing What to Expect

When a death takes place, you may experience a wide range of emotions, even when the death is expected. Many people report feeling an initial stage of numbness after first learning of a death, but there is no real order to the grieving process.

# Knowing What to Expect

Some emotions you may experience include:

- Denial
- Disbelief
- Confusion

# Knowing What to Expect

Other emotions you may experience include:

- Shock
- Sadness
- Yearning

# Knowing What to Expect

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Your experience may also include:

- Anger
- Humiliation
- Despair
- Guilt



# Normal Feelings

These feelings are normal and common reactions to loss.  
You may not be prepared for the intensity and duration of your emotions or how swiftly your moods may change.

## Is this Normal?

You may even begin to doubt the stability of your mental health.

But be assured that these feelings are healthy and appropriate and will help you come to terms with your loss.



**Shield**  
HealthCare



# Remember...

It takes time to fully absorb the impact of a major loss.

You never stop missing your loved one, but the pain eases after time and allows you to go on with your life.

# Mourning vs. Grieving

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Experts make a distinction between grief and mourning, saying that grief is a subjective state, a set of feelings that arise spontaneously after a significant death, whereas, mourning is a set of rituals or behaviors prescribed by culture's tradition.



# Mourning A Loved One

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It is not easy to cope after a loved one dies.

You will mourn and grieve.



# Mourning

Mourning is the natural process you go through to accept a major loss.

Mourning is personal and may last months or years.

Mourning is the conventional manifestation of sorrow for a person's death (ie: wearing of black clothes, or black armband, flags flown at half-mast, ect.)



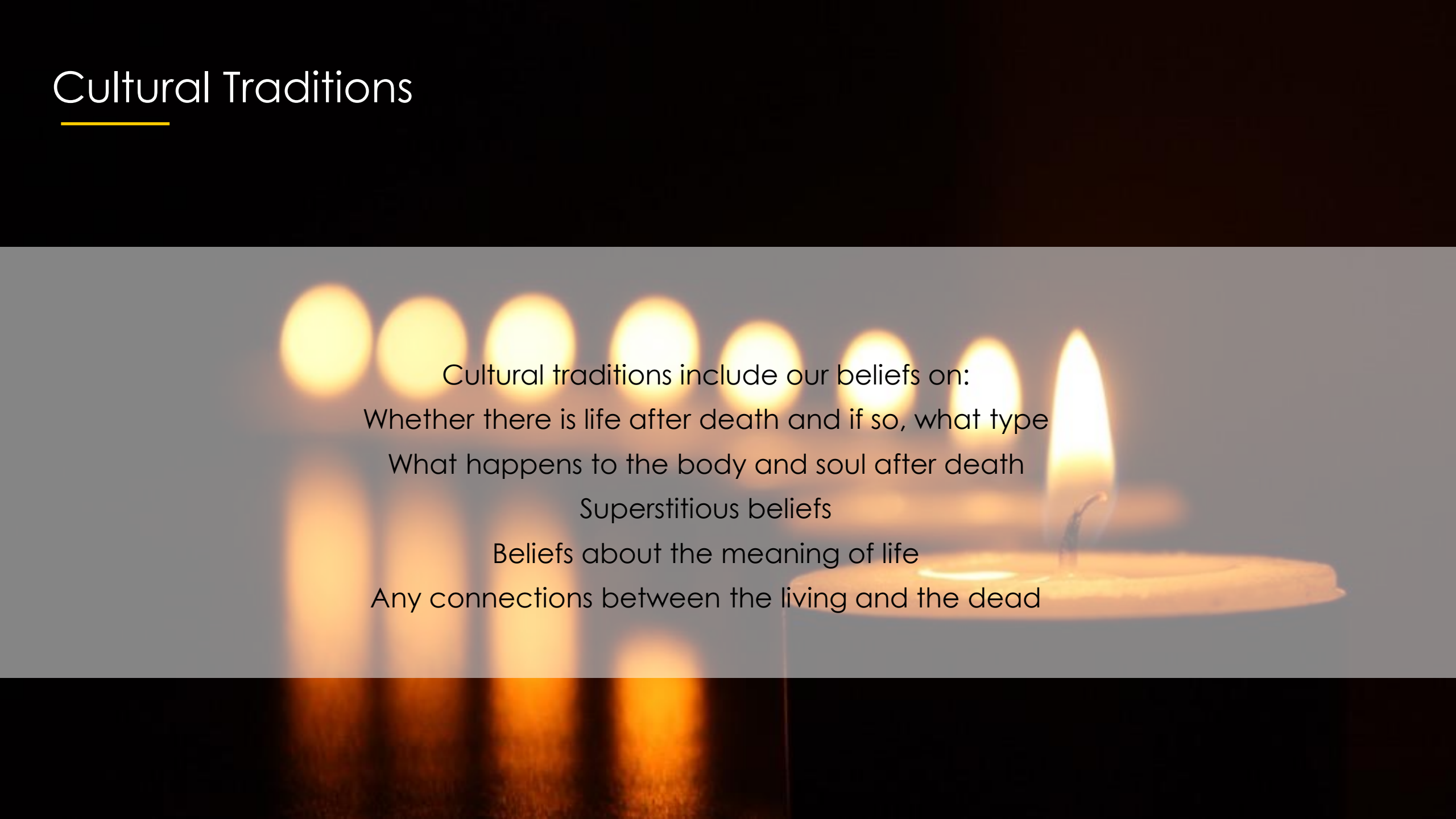
# Mourning

Mourning may include religious traditions honoring the dead or gathering with friends and family to share your loss.



# Cultural Traditions

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Cultural traditions include our beliefs on:

- Whether there is life after death and if so, what type
- What happens to the body and soul after death
- Superstitious beliefs
- Beliefs about the meaning of life
- Any connections between the living and the dead



# Jewish Cultural Traditions



Shiva, memorial stones

# Hispanic Cultural Traditions

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Day of the Dead

# Catholic Cultural Traditions

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A row of lit candles is shown against a dark background. The candles are lit, and their flames are visible. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the text "Wake, Rosary".

Wake, Rosary

# Buddhist Cultural Traditions


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A row of lit candles is shown against a dark background. The candles are lit, and their flames are visible. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the word "Readings".

Readings

# African Cultural Traditions

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A row of lit candles is shown against a dark background. The candles are arranged in a line, and their flames are bright yellow and orange. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is overlaid on the middle of the image, containing the word "Songs".

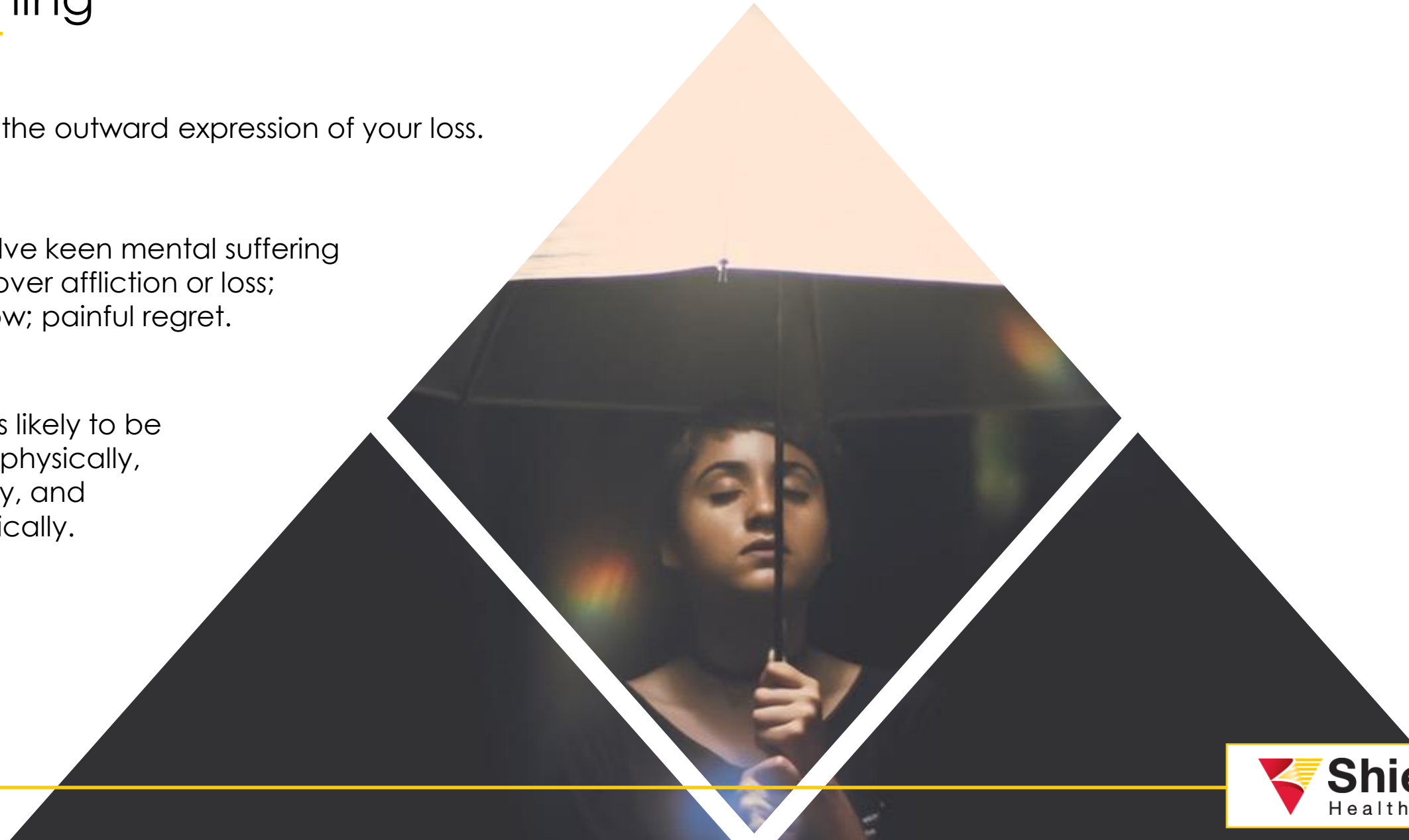
Songs

# Mourning

Grieving is the outward expression of your loss.

It can involve keen mental suffering or distress over affliction or loss; sharp sorrow; painful regret.

Your grief is likely to be expressed physically, emotionally, and psychologically.



# Grieving

For instance, crying is a physical expression, while depression is a psychological expression.

It is very important to allow yourself to express these feelings. Often, death is a subject that is avoided, ignored or denied.



# Grieving

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At first it may seem helpful to separate yourself from the pain, but you cannot avoid grieving forever.

Someday those feelings will need to be resolved or they may cause physical or emotional illness.



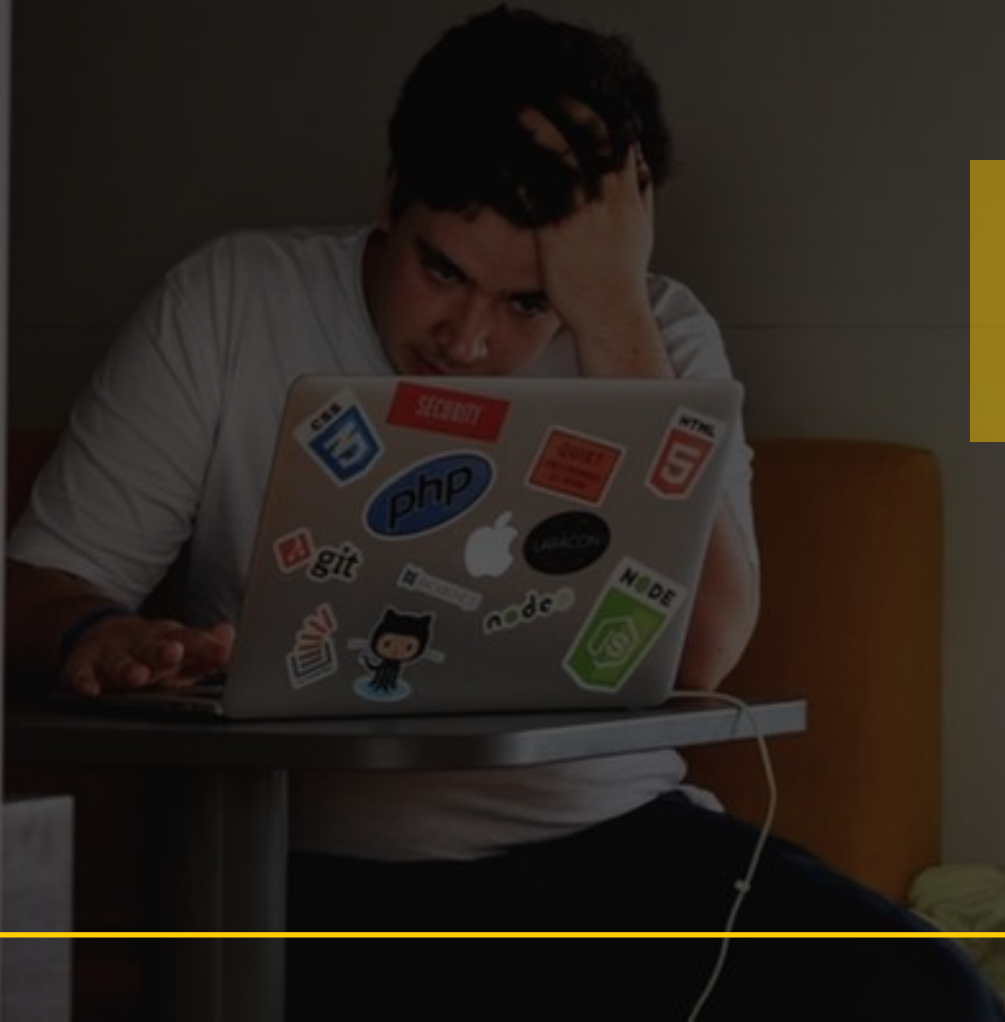
# Grieving

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Many people report physical symptoms that accompany grief. Stomach pain, loss of appetite, intestinal upsets, sleep disturbances and loss of energy are all common symptoms of acute grief.

# Mourning

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Of all life's stresses, mourning can seriously test your natural defense systems.

Existing illnesses may worsen or new conditions may develop.



# Grieving

Profound emotional reactions may occur.

These reactions include anxiety attacks, chronic fatigue, depression and thoughts of suicide.

An obsession with the deceased is also a common reaction to death.

# Dealing with a Major Loss

The death of a loved one is always difficult.

Your reactions are influenced by the circumstances of a death, particularly when it is sudden or accidental.

Your reactions are also influenced by your relationship with the person who died.

# A child's death

A child's death arouses an overwhelming sense of injustice — for lost potential, unfulfilled dreams and senseless suffering.

## A child's death

Parents may feel responsible for the child's death, no matter how irrational that may seem.

Parents may also feel that they have lost a vital part of their own identity.

# A spouse's death

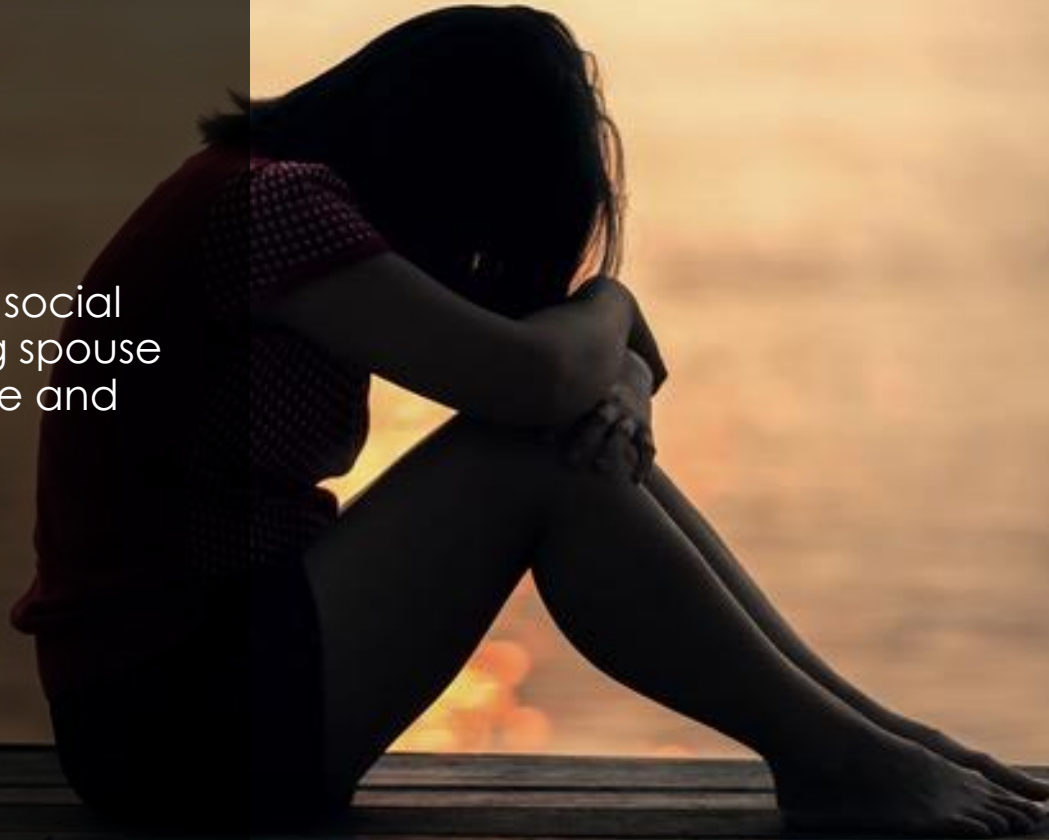
A spouse's death is very traumatic.

In addition to the severe emotional shock, the death may cause a potential financial crisis if the spouse was the family's main income source.

# A spouse's death

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The death may necessitate major social adjustments requiring the surviving spouse to parent alone, adjust to single life and maybe even return to work.





# Elderly people

Elderly people may be especially vulnerable.

When they lose a spouse it also means losing a lifetime of shared experiences.

At this time, feelings of loneliness may be compounded by the death of close friends.



## A loss due to suicide

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A loss due to suicide can be among the most difficult losses to bear.

They may leave the survivors with a tremendous burden of guilt, anger and shame.



# A loss due to suicide

Survivors may even feel responsible for the death.

Seeking counseling during the first weeks after the suicide is particularly beneficial and advisable.

# Living with Grief

Coping with death is vital to your mental health.

It is only natural to experience grief when a loved one dies.

The best thing you can do is allow yourself to grieve.

There are many ways to cope effectively with your pain.

# Living with Grief

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Seek out caring people.

Find relatives and friends who can understand your feelings of loss.

Join support groups with others who are experiencing similar losses.



# Living with Grief

Express your feelings.

Tell others how you are feeling; it will help you to work through the grieving process.

# Living with Grief

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Take care of your health.

Maintain regular contact with your family physician and be sure to eat well and get plenty of rest.

Be aware of the danger of developing a dependence on medication or alcohol to deal with your grief.

# Living with Grief

Accept that life is for the living.

It takes effort to begin to live again in the present and not dwell on the past.



## Living with Grief

Postpone major life changes.

Try to hold off on making any major changes, such as moving, remarrying, changing jobs or having another child.

You should give yourself time to adjust to your loss.



## Living with Grief

Be patient.

It can take months or even years to absorb a major loss and accept your changed life.

# Living with Grief

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Seek outside help when necessary.

If your grief seems like it is too much to bear, seek professional assistance to help work through your grief.

It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help.



## Helping Others Grieve

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If someone you care about has lost a loved one, you can help them through the grieving process.



# Helping Others Grieve

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Share the sorrow.

Allow them — even encourage them — to talk about their feelings of loss and share memories of the deceased.

# Helping Others Grieve

Don't offer false comfort.

It doesn't help the grieving person when you say "it was for the best" or "you'll get over it in time."

Instead, offer a simple expression of sorrow and take time to listen.

# Helping Others Grieve

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Offer practical help.

Baby-sitting, cooking and running errands are all ways to help someone who is in the midst of grieving.

# Helping Others Grieve

## ***Be patient.***

Remember that it can take a long time to recover from a major loss.  
Make yourself available to talk.



# Helping Others Grieve

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Encourage professional help when necessary.

Don't hesitate to recommend professional help when you feel someone is experiencing too much pain to cope alone.



# Helping Children Grieve

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Children who experience a major loss may grieve differently than adults.

A parent's death can be particularly difficult for small children, affecting their sense of security or survival.

# Helping Children Grieve

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Often, they are confused about the changes they see taking place around them, particularly if well-meaning adults try to protect them from the truth or from their surviving parent's display of grief.

# Helping Children Grieve

Limited understanding and an inability to express feelings puts very young children at a special disadvantage.

Young children may revert to earlier behaviors (such as bed-wetting), ask questions about the deceased that seem insensitive, invent games about dying or pretend that the death never happened.



# Helping Children Grieve

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Coping with a child's grief puts added strain on a bereaved parent.

However, angry outbursts or criticism only deepen a child's anxiety and delays recovery. Instead, talk honestly with children, in terms they can understand.





# Helping Children Grieve

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Take extra time to talk with them about death and the person who has died.

Use age appropriate language.

Help them work through their feelings and remember that they are looking to adults for suitable behavior.

# Resources for Children

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Fernside

513-246-9140

[www.fernside.org](http://www.fernside.org)

Offers phone support to parents and guardians with questions or concerns about the needs of grieving children; also has “How to Help” booklets to help adults assist grieving children

# Resources for Children

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Kids Konnected

800-899-2866

[www.kidskonnected.org](http://www.kidskonnected.org)

A support network for children and teens who have lost a parent to cancer



# Resources



National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization

(703) 837-1500

1731 King Street  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

[www.caringinfo.org](http://www.caringinfo.org)

[www.nhpco.org/resources/  
grief-and-bereavement](http://www.nhpco.org/resources/grief-and-bereavement)

**HFA** HOSPICE FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

(202) 457-5811  
(800) 854-3402

1707 L Street NW, Suite 220  
Washington, DC 20036

[www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org)



# Resources



Local offices with resources on many aspects of grief and loss.

- Support Groups
- Caregiver support
- Books and materials

250 Williams Street NW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 320-3333



**CENTERING CORPORATION**  
**AND**  
**GRIEF DIGEST MAGAZINE**  
GRIEF RESOURCES

Information, books, and more on bereavement and loss for children and adults.

[www.centering.org](http://www.centering.org)  
(866) 218-0101

Materials also available in Spanish.





# Support Groups

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## Who should use support groups?

Support groups are offered as a space where individuals can come together to share their stories, experiences, and lives in a way that helps reduce isolation and loneliness.

# Support Groups

Oftentimes, we think we are struggling alone, but support groups help us see that there are others who may be dealing with similar situations and who in turn can help us get better.



# Support Groups

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Support groups are open to anyone, but they are often focused on specific topics (i.e. depression, family, divorce, grief, etc.)

So, take some time and do some research to find the right one for you and your current situation.

# Support Groups

Finding the right support group can be helpful. Do not be discouraged if the first support group you find doesn't quite feel right.

You should feel comfortable in the support group space that you choose, so trying different ones may help you determine the best fit.





# Support Group Resources

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## **GriefNet**

(734) 761-1960

[www.griefnet.org](http://www.griefnet.org)

For children: <http://kidsaid.com>

Information on grief and bereavement; online and email groups for adult grief support; separate online support groups for children under 12 and for teens (with consent from parent or guardian)

## **The Dougy Center**

(866) 775-5683

[www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org)

Information, books, DVDs, and online activities for grieving children, teens, adults, and their families. They refer to programs across the country and around the world that serve to help children in grief. Some support groups offered, even for very young children.

# Looking to the Future

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Remember, with support, patience and effort, you will survive grief.

Some day the pain will lessen, leaving you with cherished memories of your loved one.





# Special

Many thanks to Mental Health America (MHA) for their assistance with the development of this program.

You can contact Mental Health America at



1-800-969-6642



[www.mentalhealthamerica.net](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net).

or at its website,

Questions ?

# Further Resources

Join our online Caregivers community at:  
[www.shieldhealthcare.com/community/caregivers](http://www.shieldhealthcare.com/community/caregivers)



The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with the Shield HealthCare logo and links for Home, Products, About, Community (selected), Services, and Customer Care. Below the navigation is a sub-menu with links for Shield Communities, Events, Resources, and Videos. The main content area features the heading "CAREGIVERS COMMUNITY" and the article title "The Blessing of Caring for My Mother with Dementia" by Gina Flores, a Caregiver Advocate. A featured image shows hands of different ages being held together. To the right, there is a webinar promotion for "Join us for a webinar" with a "Learn More" button and logos for Shield HealthCare Webinars, OstromyLife, SkinPreservation, and GROW. Below this is a "Caregivers Community Links" section with buttons for "Home" and "Caregivers 101".