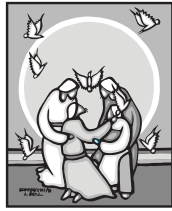


Za-geh-do-win

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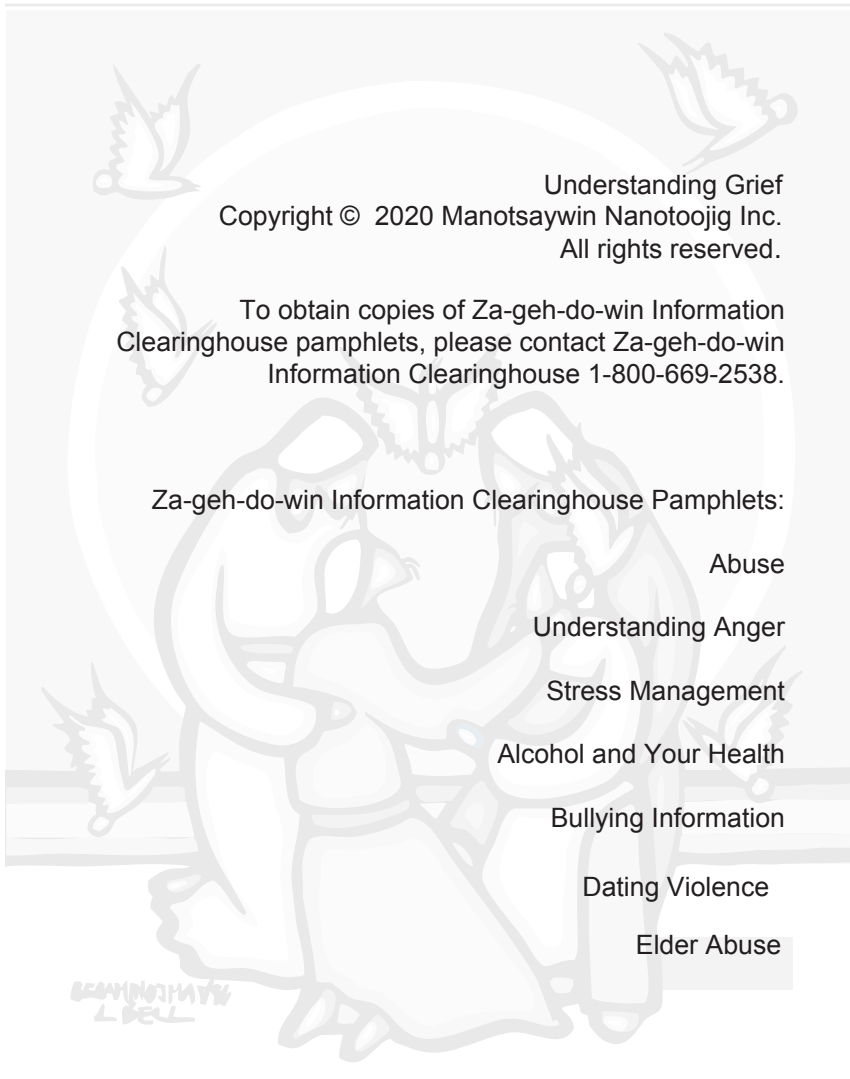
UNDERSTANDING GRIEF




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- Understanding and Coping with Loss and Grief www.ontario.cmha.ca
- Florals by Emma Petahtegoose



Understanding Grief
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Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse Pamphlets:

- Abuse
- Understanding Anger
- Stress Management
- Alcohol and Your Health
- Bullying Information
- Dating Violence
- Elder Abuse

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Notes

What is Grief?

Grief happens when there is change in our lives. Grief can be sudden and unexpected. Grief is a part of life and a natural reaction to loss. Emotions during this time can be strong and overwhelming as we respond to a loss. Many relate and experience grief when there has been a loss of a loved one.

Grieving is a process and it may impact in different ways; physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. The more significant the loss, the more intense your grief could be.

Physical effects may look like; fatigue, nausea, weight loss or weight gain, aches & pains and insomnia.

Emotional effects may look like; shock, anger, guilt, disbelief and or profound sadness.

Mental effects may look like; depression, difficulty thinking clearly, memory loss or irrational thinking.

Spiritual effects may look like; isolation or a sense of loneliness, losing faith in your higher power or a change in spirituality.

There is no time limit on how long it will take you to grieve a loss. As you heal, and move through the grieving process, you come to a place of acceptance. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each of us grieves in our own way.

The loss someone or something you love can be challenging. There is no grief that is more important, than any another. Acknowledging your grief will support you on your healing journey.

Our families and communities have many strengths, most importantly our connection and grounding in our culture, values and relationship with the land. Although, we may feel alone during times of grief, we are never alone and have many resources to help us on our healing journey.

The Most Common Symptoms of Grief

Shock and disbelief: It can be difficult to accept your loss, you can feel numb, even question whether the loss really happened, these are normal reactions.

Sadness: This is a universal experience and can often lead to feelings of isolation. You may believe that no one can understand your grief.

Guilt: There may be a lot of unanswered questions that may result in feelings of guilt.

Anger: Suffering a loss often creates feelings of anger. You may want to blame something or someone, this is all part of the healing process, it is normal. No one can dictate how quickly we should move through this part of the healing process.

Fear: A loss can trigger feelings of fear. The uncertainty of what lays ahead can be overwhelming, reach out to a loved one and seek support services.

Questions to Ask Yourself

Do I feel sad?

Do I feel angry?

Am I blaming myself in some way?

Do I feel angry at the Creator or my Higher Power?

Do you have deteriorating relationships with friends and family?

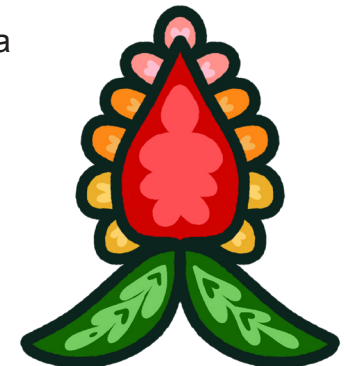
Are you experiencing a lack of interest in school or work?

Are you experiencing changes in sleeping and eating patterns?

If you answered yes to any or all of the questions, you are likely experiencing grief. Reach out to talk to someone and seek support services in your community.

Where to Go for Help

- Community Health Centre and Support Workers
- Your Counsellor or Therapist
- Healing and Sharing Circles
- Talk to someone you trust
- Elders
- Grief support groups
- **Kids Help Phone**
1-800-668-6868
<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca>
- **Canadian Virtual Hospice**
www.virtualhospice.ca



Moving Towards Healing & Wellness

PHYSICAL CARE - Take care of your body. Get all the rest & sleep you need. Be mindful of diet & exercise and limit your alcohol & drug intake.

EMOTIONAL CARE - Get creative about expressing and releasing your emotions. It is helpful to express your feelings of grief. You may want to try writing your loved one a letter, reach out to a friend or spend time with family and loved ones. Try to find humor in everyday life, laughter is the best medicine.

MENTAL CARE - Start a “grief journal”, documenting your healing journey. Utilize music and or poetry to provide an emotional outlet for your feelings. It is better to bare the burden of grief when it is shared, reach out to a mental health provider.

SPIRITUAL CARE - Treat yourself gently, strengthen your connection to the land and find opportunities to utilize your medicine bundle. Remember, culture is the cure.



Facts About Grief

- In order to healing from grief, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it. Running away from the pain it brings or trying to keep it from surfacing will only make it worse.
- Showing your true emotions during the grieving process can help you and others around you heal. Feeling sad, afraid, or lonely are all normal reactions to loss or grief.
- Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it is not the only response. There are many ways that we experience and demonstrate loss.
- Moving on helps you in accepting your loss. It doesn't mean you are forgetting your loss, but that you are moving on with your life and still keep the memories that are most important.
- Survivor guilt is often part of the grieving process, and will require developing healthy coping mechanisms as you move forward.
- There are many traditional teachings around grief in our Indigenous culture, that can support us through very difficult times, seek out an elder or traditional support services in your community.

The Effects of Grief

The grieving process is a huge strain on your mind, body and spirit.

- It may affect your immunity and ability to fight other physical ailments.
- You may have feelings of intense physical and or emotional discomfort.
- It may cause stress which is linked to both emotional and physical symptoms.

Emotional and physical self-care may help ease complications of grief. Exercising, healthy eating, getting enough sleep, talking to a loved one or a counselor, and connecting with culture and nature may help with physical and mental health.

The Stages of Grief

These stages are five general stages as described by *Elizabeth Kubler-Ross* in her 1969 book, *On Death and Dying*; not everyone experiences the stages in this exact order.

Denial: This can't be happening?

Anger: Why did this happen? Who is to blame?

Bargaining: Make this not happen and I will...

Depression: I can't bear this; I'm too sad to do anything.

Acceptance: I acknowledge that this has happened, and I cannot change it.

Utilizing the Grandfather Teachings to Cope with Grief

Humility: being able to see that we are not alone in our trauma or loss. Humility helps us move towards acceptance.

Truth: speaking from the heart and building on our values helps us to be open to healing.

Love: helps us find balance and brings a sense of peace and wellbeing. Opening our hearts to love is part of the healing process and helps us on our healing journey.

Honesty: being truthful to ourselves is honoring us and others. Honesty is bravely facing our fear, anger and loss.

Respect: respecting ourselves allows us to respect others, respecting our feelings is an act of inner strength and courage, it gives us the strength necessary to move forward on our healing journey.

Bravery: we must be brave in the face of change and loss. Knowing humility, love, honesty, truth and respect gives us the strength and the courage to let go.

Wisdom: you gain wisdom through life experiences such as grief. Wisdom is best used in helping ourselves and others learn from our experiences.

