

Healing Through Grieving

OFFICE OF LYCOMING COUNTY CORONER



Charles E. Kiessling, Jr., RN, BSN

Lycoming County Coroner

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Lycoming County Communications Center

24 Hour Access

(570) 433-4360 or (800) 555-7811 (PA only)

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A Message From the Coroner:

As the Lycoming County Coroner, I would like to express my sincere sympathy during your loss. My office is always available to assist you and your family during the difficult times ahead.

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

This booklet was developed to assist you through the grieving process and to provide you with community resources available should you need assistance. Please feel free to contact my office or any of the agencies listed, should you feel the need for support or guidance.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Kiessling, Jr., RN, BSN

Lycoming County Coroner

GRIEF
MORE THAN
JUST A
FIVE LETTER
WORD

Written by
Paul T. Clements, PhD, RN, CS
Gloria C. Henry



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Bereavement Support Group

Hospitality Lounge
802 Campbell Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
Wednesday, 6:00 P.M.

Bereavement Support Group

Susque View Home
Conference Room
Lock Haven, PA
Thursday, 7:00 P.M.

Grief Share Support Group

First United Methodist Church
602 S. Market Street
Muncy, PA 17756
Tuesday, 7:00 P.M.

Jeremiah 31:13

I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will
give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow.

Support Groups

The following is a list of support groups and resources in our community. It is provided by the Lycoming County Coroner's Office-(570) 327-2305. In a crisis situation, when logic and reasoning are diminutive, we encourage parents and their families to contact a local support group.

Behavior Health Center

Assessment and Referral
Coordinators
Divine Providence Hospital
Individual and Group
Bereavement
1201 Grampian Blvd.
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 320-7525
(800) 949-4364
On-call, 24 Hours
Walk-ins welcome
8:30 A.M.– 3:00 P.M.

Crisis Intervention

(570) 326-7895
24 Hours

Catholic Social Services

1201 Grampian Blvd., Ste 2G
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 322-4220
By appointment only,
Monday-Friday
9:00 A.M.-5:00 P.M.

Cornerstone Family Health

Outpatient Psychotherapy and
Counseling
1205 Grampian Blvd.
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 326-4118
By appointment only

The Bereavement Support Group

802 Campbell Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
(570) 320-7690
Pat Kiernan
Monday-Friday
24 Hours

Thanos (Widows and Widowers Group)

Lycoming Presbyterian Church
825 Arch Street
Williamsport, PA 17701
Marian Horak
(570) 323-0310

Compassionate Friends

Zion Lutheran Church
Fifth and Market Streets
Sunbury, PA
(570) 524-2927
Monday, 7:00 P.M.

Empty Arms Support Group

Evangelical Hospital
Community Health Center
(570) 522-2000
Monday, 7:00 P.M.

Bereavement Support Group

Muncy Valley Hospital
Skilled Nursing Unit
(570) 546-8282
Tuesday, 2:00 P.M.

G-R-I-E-F

Grief is a complicated little word. Grief can occur as a result of loss stemming from affliction, violence, accidents, sudden change, and death. The grieving process is just as complicated as this five letter word is simple.

Grief can resemble an emotional wave that can be very disruptive to daily life. When a loss occurs, it is typically a total shock, even if the loss was expected. It is at this point that the grieving process begins.

In the beginning... Shock and numbness

Shock and numbness are a very normal initial reaction. During this time, talk about the loss. This can help validate that the loss has occurred and can facilitate reinvesting in life. The assistance of family and friends can be additionally helpful. However, family and friends will eventually need to return to their own lives. Suddenly it may feel as though you are all alone and facing the reality of the loss. This is when grieving and mourning really begin and can be a roller coaster ride of emotions. It is now that you will find yourself confronted with your grief. It is possible for grief to affect us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

The path of grief...

The only way to get through your grief is to go all the way in and the only way to get past your grief is to go all the way through it.

G

Goals for healing

- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Start with small short ones.
- Accept the fact that what you are feeling is real and may be painful.
- Remember that the pain of loss might manifest itself in many different ways.
- Know that you must mourn the loss, so allow yourself to do just that.
- Go with your feelings and do not attempt to minimize the fact that the pain of loss exists.
- Cry if and when you feel like it.
- Do not allow yourself to go into a state of loneliness; do not avoid those who care about you.

- Do not allow guilt or fear to set you back. We often feel that we could have or should have done something to prevent what happened and may begin to worry about future losses.
- Experience your thoughts and feelings one day at a time.

R Responses to grieving

- Each person grieves differently and at his/her own speed. It is important not to try to rush through your grief.
- Don't be too hard on yourself by thinking you should be feeling well and be "over it" in a month or two.
- Grief-related symptoms are typical for at least the first year, and may be considered normal for up to two years. (However, extreme grief-related symptoms may require medical or mental health intervention.)
- Do not allow others to define the loss for you. Decide for yourself what the loss means to you.
- Allow yourself to "backslide." Just because you felt great yesterday does not mean that you may feel the same today, tomorrow, or next week. Grief is a process with peaks and valleys along the way.
- It's OK to feel angry, betrayed, fearful, tired, confused or ill; these symptoms can be normal grief responses. However, if they persist, do contact your health-care provider.
- Don't be surprised if you find yourself repeating the story of your loss over and over again. This helps to make the loss real and helps you to explore what the loss really means to you.
- Although you may not feel like it, eat nutritiously, exercise, and get adequate rest.

I Intervention for healthy grieving

- If you feel that you need help and are worried about your well-being or safety, contact a grief counselor or other health care provider who will help validate your feelings and strategize for appropriate help.
- Join a support group. This can provide an opportunity for you to speak with others who can relate to what you are going through.
- Accept the help of family and friends. Remember, they may be unsure of how to help. Share with them what you need.
- Do not allow others to talk you into making any major decisions.

in children and teens who are already depressed or anxious

- Remember that young children who are depressed typically have different symptoms (e.g., restlessness, excessive motor activity) than older school-age children or teens who are depressed (e.g., sad or withdrawn affect; difficulty sleeping or eating; talking about feeling hopeless).
- Anger can be a sign of anxiety in children and teens.
- Children, even teens, who are stressed typically regress (e.g., revert to doing things that they did when they were younger, such as sucking their thumbs, bedwetting, or acting dependent upon their parents). This is a healthy temporary coping strategy. However, if these symptoms persist for several weeks, talk to your healthcare provider about them.

9. Use this opportunity as a time to work with children on their coping skills.
10. Be sure to have your child or teen seen by a healthcare provider or mental health professional for signs or symptoms of depression, persistent anxiety, recurrent pain, persistent behavioral changes, or if they have difficulty maintaining their routine schedules.
11. Remember that this can be an opportunity to build future coping and life skills as well as bring your family unit closer together.

Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, RN, CPNP
 Chair, KySS Campaign
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This handout, part of the KySS (Keep your children/yourself Safe and Secure) Campaign, may be reproduced for use with and dissemination to families with children and teens. The KySS campaign, founded by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) and endorsed/supported by 15 other national nursing and interdisciplinary organizations, is a national effort to prevent and reduce psychosocial morbidities in children and teens. For more information about the KySS campaign, please contact the national office of NAPNAP at 1-877-662-7627 or Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk.tragedytips

HELPING CHILDREN, TEENS, AND THEIR FAMILIES COPE WITH TRAGEDY

1. Be honest and give age and developmentally appropriate explanations about the traumatic event.
 - For young children, in particular, only provide answers to questions they are asking and do not overwhelm them with too much detail. Use language that young children can understand. Do not expose young children to visual images that are terrifying in the newspapers or television.
 - It may be easier for young children to express how they are feeling by asking them to talk about how their stuffed animals or dolls are feeling or thinking.
2. Help children and teens to express how they are feeling about what they have seen or heard. If children have difficulty verbally expressing their feelings, ask them to make a drawing about how they are feeling. Older school-age children and teens can benefit from writing about how they feel.
 - Ask children and teens, "What is the scariest or worst thing about this event for you?"
3. Reassure children that they did nothing wrong to cause what happened.
 - Toddlers and preschool children especially feel guilty when something tragic happens.
4. Tell children and teens that what they are feeling (e.g., anger, anxiety, helplessness) is normal and that others feel the same way.
5. Alleviate some of their anxiety by reassuring children that we will get through this together and will be stronger as a result of what we have been through. Emphasize that everything is now under control and that adults will be there to help them through this and that they are not alone.
6. Help children and teens to release their tension by encouraging daily physical exercise and activities.
7. Continue to provide structure to children's schedules and days.
8. Recognize that a tragic event could elevate psychological or physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, abdominal pain or chest pain

E Effectiveness

Short-term goals:

- You can talk about the loss without feeling overwhelmed or bursting into tears.
- Your energy level is improved and you feel like participating in various activities.
- Sleep and dietary patterns begin to normalize.
- Your life feels more organized.
- Decision-making is easier.
- It is easier to be around people.

Long-term goals:

- The inner pain begins to decrease.
- You can now talk about the loss.
- Your sense of humor returns.
- Decision-making now occurs without feeling the need to second-guess yourself.
- Sleep and dietary patterns return to normal.
- Relationships with others are renewed or rebuilt.

F Final thoughts

- When looking at the long-term goals, if they apply to you, then you have completed the grieving process. However, there are still going to be times when you may feel the pain of your loss. This only means that instead of days, weeks or months, the periods of pain will be fleeting moments.
- Don't be alarmed or surprised to find yourself saddened during the holidays, special occasions, or as you near the anniversary date of your loss. These are typical times for thoughts to be drawn to the loss.
- As healing progresses, the sadness will decrease (but may never completely go away).
- One final rule of thumb: The goal of good grief is not to try to forget the loss, but to put the loss into perspective in your own particular life history and reinvest or find whatever in life you enjoy.

Paul T. Clements, PhD, RN, CS, is an Assistant Professor at the University of New Mexico College of Nursing. A bereavement therapist and trauma consultant, Dr. Clements specializes in providing therapy and counseling to families in the aftermath of violent deaths.

Gloria C. Henry is a bereavement specialist in Philadelphia and provides counseling and consultation to families and the community, particularly those experiencing sudden and traumatic deaths