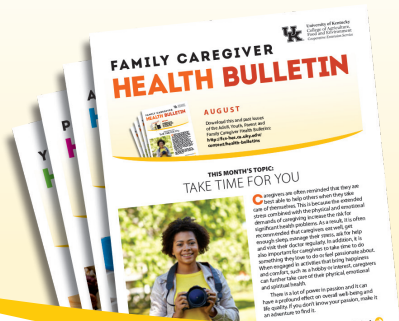




University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



MARCH 2022

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: TYPES OF GRIEF AND LOSS



We experience loss in many ways, big and small — death, traumatic events, pandemics, natural disasters, breakups, unemployment, changes in daily routine, ups and downs with money and health, etc. It is common to experience multiple losses at the same time. According to the CDC, working through multiple losses at the same time can be difficult, but harmful if ignored. No matter the type or extent of loss(es), it is important to digest the grief that comes with loss. Grief, a normal response to loss, can cause a variety of complex feelings and behaviors such as sadness, disbelief, denial, anger, and changes in eating and sleeping.

Understanding the different types of grief and loss may help people better understand it and work through it. Types of grief and loss include:

- **Relational Loss.** Relational loss is most often associated with death of a loved

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one, separations or divorces in romantic relationships or even friendships.

- **Object or Non-Death Loss.** Non-death loss refers to significant physical, psychological, spiritual, and/or loss related to interpersonal life. Examples may include home foreclosure, a lost treasured heirloom in a natural disaster, or a favorite toy left behind. Object loss can also include moving, changes in office space, infertility, and the loss of income or financial stability. Non-death loss is personal and often minimized by others.
- **Role or Identity Loss.** Identity or role loss includes life's transitions and/or changes in health status or independence. It also includes titles that we may carry and lose through work, education, volunteering, and even family or personal life. Loss associated with our sense of identity runs deep, but often goes ignored by others.
- **Invisible Loss.** Invisible loss includes everything from lost dreams, goals, and wishes to the loss of security and control. Invisible loss includes major disruptions in personal plans and experiences to which you may have looked forward. It even includes loss of ideas and beliefs. Traumatic Grief or Loss. Traumatic grief is often associated with unexpected loss or loss that is out of order. Examples may include death of a child, sudden or unexpected death of a loved one, peer, or co-worker, and violent deaths.
- **Anticipatory Grief.** While grief will still occur after the loss, anticipatory grief shows up before, often in cases that involve terminal illnesses, Alzheimer's disease, impending ends to relationships, fears of the unknown, and even risky behavior. While anticipatory grief is normal, some people may feel that it is unacceptable to express such pain and anxiety.
- **Secondary Loss.** Secondary loss includes the domino effect — when one loss happens, a range of loss may follow. Secondary loss can be challenging because acknowledgement and support is not always the same as it is for the primary loss, but the impacts of the secondary loss can be just as devastating. One example of a secondary loss is the loss of hopes, dreams, or future plans after a partner dies. Ambiguous Loss. Ambiguous grief is associated with unknowns and uncertainties and grieving for the way things used

to be. The unknowns are often associated with tension, anxiety, and not knowing what to do.

- **Disenfranchised Grief.** Disenfranchised grief occurs when the loss or grief does not fit society's expectation or standards of grief. Society may feel that a person did not show the right emotion, the cause of death is taboo, the loss was not a death — or not a human death, the death was not a family member, etc. The lack of support can extend emotional pain.
- **Non-Finite Loss.** Non-finite loss is the grief associated with what life is supposed to look like (in our heads) versus how it actually turns out. When things do not work out the way in which we anticipated and/or planned, a deep sense of grief can arise.
- **Collective Grief.** Collective grief is grief felt by a group — such as a community or nation. When a pandemic, natural disaster, terrorist attack, or even climate change are experienced, the effects can create a ripple effect.
- **Cumulative Grief or Loss.** Cumulative loss occurs when a new loss is experienced before you have the chance to fully grieve the first loss or when you experience multiple losses at the same time or in a short amount of time.

Regardless of the type of loss, grief is real and valid. According to the CDC you can do things to work through your grief:

- Acknowledge your losses and your feelings of grief.
- Express your grief through creative outlets and rituals.
- Stay connected with people and your community.
- Stay focused on the present and aspects of your life you can control.
- Seek personal and/or professional help.

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