



### TRIGGERS: Dealing with Grieve and Loss

Let's face it, life can be tough sometimes. We all face moments of loss that can leave us feeling down in the dumps. Experiencing loss is an inevitable part of the human experience. Whether it's the loss of a loved one, a breakup, a job loss, or any other form of loss, these emotions can be overwhelming and challenging to deal with. In times of distress, it is common to resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms such as drugging, excessive drinking, emotional eating, or isolation.

But here's the thing – it is okay to grieve or feel sad. In fact, recognising and validating our emotions is important. Instead of brushing those feelings under the rug and pretending like everything is fine, we need to take a moment to acknowledge our sadness and give ourselves permission to feel those emotions.

Because loss comes in many forms, understanding the different types of loss can help us go through with our emotions and find better coping mechanisms. No matter what kind of loss we experience, our feelings are always valid.

**Grieve** is probably the toughest emotion to deal with, and it looks different for everyone. It's important that we understand that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. We have to allow ourselves the space and patience to go through the ups and downs of the grieving process. Dr Kubler Ross outlined seven stages of grieve namely: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Acceptance, Guilt and then Reconstruction. It is vital to know that this process may not be in a linear path, so we must not be too hard on ourselves if we seem to be taking one step forward and two steps back.

When we are feeling down, the last thing we want to do is hit the gym. But trust me on this one, physical activities and exercise can do wonders for our moods. We can choose whether we will go for a walk or try out a new workout class, but we have to get our bodies moving to

releases endorphins that can help lift our spirits. Additionally it is a great way to distract ourselves and focus on something positive.

Sometimes, we will need that **moment of stillness to clear the noise in our minds**. I cannot express enough how important mindfulness and meditation can help us achieve just that. Focusing on the present moment and letting go of our worries about the past mistakes and our future, we can find a sense of calm amidst the chaos. There are plenty of apps and guided meditation resources available, so why not go to Google or YouTube and find what works for you and give it a try.

**Creativity has a way of healing our soul.** Whether we paint, write, play an instrument, doodle or just make up songs as we go; expressing our emotions through creative outlets can be incredibly therapeutic. We don't have to worry about our artistic skills; it's not about creating a masterpiece, but rather about channelling our feelings into something tangible and meaningful.

If creativity isn't our cup of tea, we should not underestimate the power of a good old pen and paper. **Journaling** and writing can help us process our thoughts and emotions in a constructive way. It's like having a conversation with ourselves, a way to sort through our feelings and gain clarity. We should grab a pen, a paper, a journal or open a new document on our computer and let the words which are in our heart and mind flow. It works for me, so I would strongly suggest you give it a try. Lastly, we have to engage with activities or hobbies that bring us joy. These little moments of pleasure can provide a much needed help in moments of grief.

During times of grief, we have to prioritise in nurturing our family relationships. We must make time to call up a family member for a chat, plan a coffee date, or simply send a thoughtful text. Connecting with others, especially family always provide a sense of belonging and remind us that we're not alone in our struggles.

### **Self-Care**

When dealing with grief, loss and sadness, we should prioritise self-care. There are a few things that we can do to take care of ourselves. When we grieve it might be difficult to sleep, yet it is very vital to get enough rest and sleep. We must give ourselves permission to recharge and rejuvenate. We can do this by curling up with a good book, take a hot bubble bath or simply getting extra sleep; believe me, our bodies and mind will thank us. Even if we don't feel like eating, we need to choose foods that will nourish our bodies to provide us with the extra energy we will need. Then, as mentioned we have to make time for activities that bring us joy and relaxation. In times of grief we have to be kind to ourselves. We are only human, and it's okay to feel pain. We must allow ourselves to grieve and acknowledge our emotions without judgment. We must treat ourselves with the same compassion and understanding we would offer to a dear friend going through a difficult time.

Our mind-set is everything when it comes to dealing with grief, sadness and loss; and a positive outlook can go a long way. It's not about pretending that everything is fine; it's about finding the silver linings and focusing on the things we can control. But how do we do that? We

surround ourselves with positive influences, practice gratitude, and remind ourselves of our strengths and where it comes from. "Ps 118:4 – My power and my strength come from the Lord, and he has saved me". By shifting our perspective we can build emotional resilience and find the strength to face whatever comes your way.

After experiencing loss, it's natural to question the meaning and purpose of life. Take some time to reflect on your personal values and beliefs. What matters most to you? What gives your life meaning? By aligning your actions with your core values, you can find a sense of purpose that will guide you forward on your journey of healing and growth. Loss may have a deep effect on our lives and perhaps change us in many ways, but when grief sets in we are actually starting to heal, we just need to ride the wave of emotions even when these feelings are in conflict with one another.

After a loss we may question our purpose in life or even feel like we have lost direction. Setting goals will be the antidote to help us move forward again. We start by setting small, achievable goals that align with our values. Focus on what we want to do. We can make a list of activities to help us achieve our goals. It may be daily, weekly or monthly. This all sounds very hard, because it is. But we have to find ways to find a renewed sense of purpose and motivation to carry on with our lives. If you are a person of faith, pouring out our hearts to God, will also bring much relieve.

Some of us may not have a support system in place to help us through grief. The good news is that there are many bereavement groups available. We must swallow our pride and simply Google or reach out to such bereavement groups. Churches will also have someone to help you work through your grief. If you are a Christian, you were adopted in the Family of God, so we have no excuse, we can turn to our family in Christ in times of need. Remember your life is worth much more than reverting back to old behavioural patterns or looking for answers in a bottle.