

William Worden created a theory called "Tasks of Grief" which are the experiences that we go through after the death of someone we care about.

1. **To accept the reality of the Loss:** this means knowing that the deceased person is no longer alive and won't be part of our everyday lives.
2. **To experience the pain of Grief:** this means that we may experience a variety of intense feelings and begin to work through them as part of the grieving process (eg: we can't avoid these feelings forever- at some point we need to face our grief).
3. **To adjust to the new environment where the deceased person is missing:** this is the part where we struggle with all of the changes that happen as a result of the person being gone- including all of the practical parts of daily living (eg: more responsibilities at home if it is a parent who died) and all of the effects their loss has upon our sense of who we are and how we see the world (eg: suddenly feeling like "Life is not fair" or being frustrated with friends who "don't understand us anymore").
4. **To reinvest energy in life, loosen ties to the deceased and forge a new type of relationship with them based on memory, spirit and love:** This means that we begin to acknowledge the value of the relationship we had with the person who died and everything we may have learned or loved or respected or disagreed with about them. We recognize that we don't need to 'forget' them and that it is okay to care and connect with other people and continue to live our lives even though we miss them.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP US BEGIN TO MOVE THROUGH OUR GRIEF Suggestions of how to move through the "Tasks of Grief"

1. **To accept the reality of the Loss:** It can be VERY difficult to totally comprehend the reality of the death right away. Many people find that they forget the person is gone and expect them to call or maybe even pick up the phone to call them.... Or you might find that you are still hoping that there was a mistake and the person is alive... Or you think you hear their voice or see them on the street?
ACTIVITY: WRITE DOWN ANY SIMILAR EXPERIENCES THAT YOU HAVE HAD TO THOSE ABOVE.
Why?: When you can find a way to gently remind yourself of the loss- it will eventually become more real so that you can begin learn to live without them and have space for joy in your life again.
2. **To experience the pain of Grief:** This part of the process can be very overwhelming or feel like you are going crazy. Grief is experienced at every level of our beings- physically, emotionally, socially, mentally and spiritually. Grief can feel like a stomach ache or head ache... It can also feel like things are moving in slow motion or you can't focus or concentrate... Maybe you feel irritable all the time or you feel angry at the world or at God for what has happened... This work takes time and a willingness to explore intense emotions, thoughts and sensations.
ACTIVITY: WRITE DOWN THE FEELINGS, THOUGHTS, SENSATIONS YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED SINCE YOUR LOSS. IDENTIFY WHERE YOU FEEL THEM IN YOUR BODY OR HOW THEY IMPACT YOUR WORK/SCHOOL/RELATIONSHIPS. YOU CAN WRITE, DRAW, PLAY MUSIC THAT MATCHES HOW YOU FEEL. LEARN TO STAY WITH THESE FEELINGS AND FIND SOMETHING THAT HELPS TO EXPRESS THEM AND MOVE THROUGH THEM.
Why?: When you find a way to identify the thoughts/feelings/sensations you are experiencing and then find a way to express them, you can begin to move through the experiences which makes new thoughts/feelings/sensations possible.
3. **To adjust to the new environment where the deceased person is missing:** For many people, it is not just the absence of our loved ones that changes our lives but also the ways we need to change our schedules, behaviours, activities, responsibilities, social/familial roles, etc... after they have died.
ACTIVITY: WRITE DOWN ALL THE WAYS THAT YOUR LIFE HAS CHANGED SINCE THE LOSS. THINK OF CHANGES IN YOUR FAMILY, IN YOUR GROUP OF FRIENDS, IN YOUR SCHOOL/WORK LIFE. HOW HAVE YOU CHANGED? HOW DO THOSE CHANGES MAKE YOU FEEL? ARE THERE OTHER PEOPLE IN YOUR LIFE WHO CAN SUPPORT YOU WITH SOME OF THOSE CHANGES OR SHARE THE BURDEN OF NEW RESPONSIBILITIES? ARE THERE PEOPLE YOU CAN TALK TO ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS RELATED TO THESE CHANGES? WILL THESE CHANGES BE PERMANENT OR ARE THEY TEMPORARY?
Why?: Recognizing all of the changes that happen in our lives as a result of our losses can feel overwhelming but it can also help to realize- you are not going crazy- it is a time of intense change and turmoil as you figure out who you are and what your place is. It also becomes easier for others to support you if you can identify and communicate what you are struggling with ("Since dad died, I am finding it really hard to take on his tasks around the house and have enough time to get what I need done... could we talk about splitting up those chores?")
4. **To reinvest energy in life, loosen ties to the deceased and forge a new type of relationship with them based on memory, spirit and love:** It can be helpful and important to find ways to celebrate and remember the person who has died in a way that has meaning for you. You do not need to "forget about them" or "move on".
ACTIVITY: Write, draw, collage, paint, mould, create an image of your favourite memory of the person or an aspect of them that you miss the most. Think about what you wish you could have told them but didn't have the chance- write them a letter... Think about how they would want to have their life celebrated and remembered. Do something that honours their memory (plant a tree, try a new activity they enjoyed, share stories about them, stay connected to the people that knew them, find a place that reminds you of them and spend some time there, create a memory box or photo album or webpage with pictures and stories... anything that makes sense to you and that honours them in a way they would want to be remembered.

Why?: After a period of time, it is common for people to feel panic or worry that they are forgetting what that person looked like, or the sound of their voice, or how they laughed, or smelled... It is important to find ways to feel connected to that relationship and all of the good things that were created from it.

“Time goes on, and your life is still there, and you have to live it. After a while you remember the good things more often than the bad. Then, gradually, the empty silent parts of you fill up with sounds of talking and laughter again, and the jagged edges of sadness are softened by memories.” ~ Lois Lowry