

GRIEF: STORMY SEAS

By Cheryl McQueen
Follow Up Series
Book Two

IN MEMORY OF

LOU

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Cheryl McQueen



LONELINESS

Loneliness is raising children without their father.

Loneliness is being home alone every Saturday night.

Loneliness is an empty cradle.

Loneliness is the table setting where no one sits.

Loneliness is having no one to kiss goodnight.

Loneliness is the tragedy of a teenage death.

Loneliness is a stillbirth.

Loneliness is a sibling succumbing to death.

Loneliness is a death through suicide.

Loneliness is having no one to cuddle.

Loneliness is not having your Dad.

Loneliness is not having your Mom.

Loneliness is the death of your child.

Loneliness is the vacant void of love.

Loneliness is the absence of a loving parent.

Loneliness is sleeping on her side of the bed.

Loneliness is being an orphan.

Loneliness is a closet full of clothes that no one wears.

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FOOTPRINTS

One night a woman had a dream. She dreamed she was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Across the sky flashed scenes from her life. For each scene she noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to her, and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of her life flashed before her, she looked back at the footprints in the sand. She noticed that many times along the path of her life there was only one set of footprints.

She also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in her life.

This really bothered her and she questioned the Lord about it. "Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way.

But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints.

I don't understand why, when I needed you most, you would leave me."

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you.

During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Originally written by Margaret Fishback Powers

GRIEF: STORMY SEA

Three months have passed and during this time relatives and friends have probably returned to "normal." They have resumed their ordinary tasks of day to day living while you are still reeling from the blow of yesterday's death events. Was it only three months ago? Sometimes it seems like only yesterday. Yet again, sometimes it feels like a lifetime ago. Time has stood still. During this period things have probably changed.

The numbness has probably worn off. It may be compared to having third degree burns. Initially your pain receptors, burned and rendered useless, became deadened to the awareness of reality. You had no sensation to pain. Throughout the last three months, as you began to heal, the ability to feel slowly started to return and with that return brought the overwhelming bewilderment of excruciating pain. This pain of grief is something like you've never felt before. It is all encompassing.

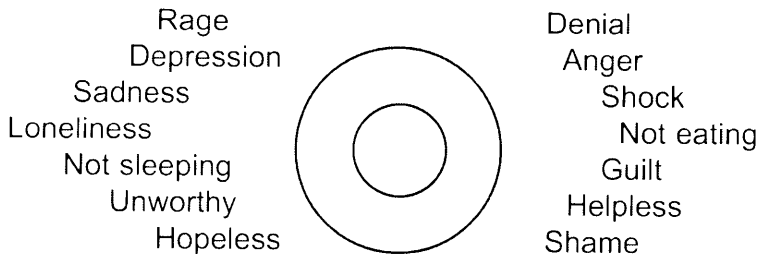
Coupled with the pain is a change in your basic personality. You may have become irritable, snapping at family, friends or casual acquaintances. Perhaps you have become hostile toward people and express anger toward those who show concern for you. Or maybe you may be feeling anxious, angry, depressed, afraid and panicky. Whatever you may be experiencing is the actualization of grief.

Grief consists of a wide range of feelings that leave you on an emotional roller coaster. It will touch every aspect of your life including your work, your relationships with others and even your own self-esteem. You may become more susceptible to the insensitive remarks of well-meaning friends and relatives.

You may also become more susceptible to physical illness and disease. Therapeutic measures must be taken, or this pain can easily become destructive in the process.

It's like being all alone in a boat on a stormy sea. Blackened with wrath and rage are the skies above you. Beside you are the waters, menacing with waves, enormous and threatening. The intensity of the storm is frightening in its relentless fury and frenzy. You are in an uncompromising and overwhelming situation. You are paralyzed with fear. You are afraid to let go. You are in the most turbulent phase of bereavement reconciliation and grief recovery. Will you ever survive? Yes, you will.

THE GRIEF WHEEL



When death occurs, feelings usually follow. Maybe they are not felt immediately, but they do come. And when they come, they will hit you at any time and at any place. You do not choose them; they choose you.

Feelings do not come in neat little packages, nor do they come in any particular order. They are not logical. And they do not come in stages. Stages were an initial pioneer attempt to address grief, but we know today, that the stages of grief do not exist.

So why do these feelings happen to some and not to others? Feelings are the result of having loved. Those who have loved will grieve. Those who haven't loved will not grieve. It's as simple as that.

If a lady in your town died, and you never knew her, or her family, you most probably will not grieve. Why? You did not have a relationship with that person. You cannot grieve what you did not have.

It is when death robs us of our loved ones that the feelings of grief are experienced. Grieving is learning to live without someone loved. It is taking each day, one day at a time, and trying to live without your loved one by your side.

HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE?

The duration and intensity of emotion felt is different for everyone. It is usually at this time that you find that you will need people who understand you. For when the numbness is gone, you may find that your grief will be the most intense as your reactions to the death of your loved one are being felt most acutely. Perhaps it is at this time that you may wish to seek out a grief support group. For when these feelings come, they need to be expressed, not repressed. Expression is healthy. Repression is not.

THE THREE V'S AND THE THREE "IZES."

- **Ventilate** - you need to ventilate your grief.
- **Validate** - you need someone to validate your grief.
- **Vocalize** - you need someone to listen as you vocalize your grief.
- **Normalize**
but do not
- **Minimize** your grief.

DEPRESSION

Depression and anger are two of the most common emotions felt after the death of a loved one. They are also the most misunderstood. Although there isn't enough space in this booklet to fully address these emotions, I will attempt to highlight some of the most common questions asked. If at any time, you feel overwhelmed by any emotions, please see your family physician. The medical people have tools and the knowledge to best diagnose and treat your symptoms.

Question: What is bipolar depression (manic-depressive illness)?

Answer: Manic-depressive illness is also called bipolar depression. Not nearly as prevalent as other forms of depressive disorders, manic depressive illness involves cycles of depression, as well as elation or mania. Sometimes the mood switches are dramatic and rapid, but most often they are gradual. When in the depressed cycle, you can have any or all of the symptoms of a depressive disorder. When in the manic cycle, any or all symptoms listed under mania may be experienced. Mania often affects thinking, judgment and social behaviour in ways that cause serious problems. For example, unwise business or financial decisions may be made when in a manic phase.

Question: What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

Answer: SAD is a pattern of depressive illness in which symptoms recur every winter. This form of depressive illness often is accompanied by such symptoms as marked decrease in energy, increased need for sleep, and carbohydrate craving. Photo-therapy (morning exposure to bright, full spectrum light) can often be dramatically helpful.

Question: What is Post Partum Depression?

Answer: Mild moodiness and "blues" are very common after having a baby, but when symptoms are more than mild or last more than a few days, help should be sought. Post partum depression can be extremely serious for both mother and baby.

Question: How is bereavement different from depression?

Answer: A full depressive syndrome frequently is a normal reaction to the death of a loved one with feelings of depression and such associated symptoms as poor appetite, weight loss and insomnia. However, morbid preoccupation with worthlessness, prolonged and marked functional impairment and marked psychomotor retardation are uncommon and suggest that the grief is complicated by the development of a Major Depression. The duration of "normal" grief varies considerably among different cultural groups.

Question: What is Major Depression?

Answer: Major depression is manifested by a combination of symptoms that interfere with the ability to work, sleep, eat and enjoy once-pleasurable activities. These disabling episodes of depression can occur once, twice, or several times in a lifetime.

Again, I must emphasize, if these feelings have been persistent and describe you or someone you know, please call your family doctor for help.

NORMAL GRIEF	CLINICAL DEPRESSION
Feels sadness but can switch to more normal moods in the same day	Feels sadness mixed with anger, sometimes directed toward self
Dreams and fantasizes particularly about death	May not recall dreams, and fantasizes infrequently
Responds to comfort and support	Does not accept comfort and support
Often openly angry at appropriate times even if not in appropriate ways	Irritable and may complain but does not directly express anger - sometimes expresses in form of rage or denies being angry altogether
Relates depressed feelings to loss experienced	Does not relate experiences to a particular life event
Can still experience moments of enjoyment in life	Exhibits an all pervading sense of doom
Exhibits feelings of sadness and emptiness	Projects a sense of hopelessness and chronic emptiness
May have transient physical complaints	Has chronic physical complaints
Will usually connect depressed feelings to the death	Often do not relate their feelings to any life event
A bereaved child is often able to use play to work out feelings of grief	The depressed child is more often resistant to the use of play
When self-esteem is temporarily impacted, may blame self for somehow not preventing the death - is preoccupied with the loss	In clinically depressed it is not unusual to feel the deep loss of esteem - may see self as bad and worthless - is preoccupied with self

ANGER

Anger is one of the most common human emotions. There is nothing wrong with being angry. It's what we do with the anger that makes it right or wrong. It is one of the most frequently expressed emotions felt by men and women. Feeling angry once in a while comes from feeling human all your life.

We may feel that it was someone else's negligence or uncaring attitude or ignorance that caused our loved one's death. For those whose loved one died as a result of negligence, crime, suicide, motor vehicle accident, drowning, natural disaster, etc., anger may become a way of life. We become furious because the person's actions were not revealed, stopped or punished. We feel that an individual or group or institution is directly responsible for the terrible loss we now have to bear. It may cloud our thinking...our rationale.

Anger and the explosive emotions that often accompany it have two avenues for expression: outward or inward. What you do with these emotions can have a powerful impact on the journey through the grief.

Questions:

1. Do you feel angry with family members for lack of support, or for over protection and for disappointment in expected help from relatives?
2. Are you angry at the death events?
3. Are you angry with the people who criticized your decisions over the funeral procedures?
4. Do you suffer from fatigue, chronic feelings of guilt, physical complaints....suicidal thoughts?

When anger is repressed and directed inward, the person's experience with grief often becomes complicated and chronic. Anger turned inward may result in agitation, tension and general restlessness. It is as if something is inside the person trying to get out.

Healthy grieving requires that anger be expressed not repressed. Many grieving people need a supportive listener who can tolerate, encourage, and validate anger without judging, retaliating or arguing. The comforting presence of a caring helper often allows the grieving person to let go of pent-up emotions.

THE FENCE

There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he had to hammer a nail into the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Then it gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper.

The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one.

You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."

SUPPORT GROUPS

The purpose of a support group is to give you a sense that you are not alone in your sorrow. Most bereaved have told me that they find comfort being with other people who have had similar experiences. Perhaps for the first time, they find someone who truly appreciates how they feel. Others, who are bereaved, understand the problems associated with the death of a loved one. Through talking and sharing their stories, they vocalize and ventilate their intense feelings. They lift the lid off their emotional pressure cooker. By doing so they validate each other's feelings.

"It's good to know that someone else feels that way too. I thought that I was the only one who felt like this. I really thought that I was losing it!"

Groups provide confidential, friendly surroundings where everyone normalizes your feelings, but no one minimizes them. The bereaved who participate in these groups tell me that it is in this environment that they are reassured that they are not going crazy, and that the anger and depression that they may be feeling at this time are part of the process of grief recovery.

In some support grief groups, the people involved become close friends and help ease the loneliness that comes from the death of a loved one. Loneliness is a sense of isolation. Those experiencing grief and who are mourning often feel misunderstood. Relatives and well-meaning friends want you to "get on with your life" and encourage you to "get back to normal." It's at this time you might want to read to them the following words of wisdom given to a deceased man's daughter by her paternal grandmother.

THAT'S NORMAL

1. If you think you are going insane - that's normal.
2. If all you do is cry - that's normal.
3. If you have trouble with most minor decisions - that's normal.
4. If you can't taste your food nor have any semblance of appetite - that's normal.
5. If you have feelings of rage, denial and depression - that's normal.
6. If you find yourself enjoying a funny moment and immediately feel guilty - that's normal.
7. If your friends dwindle away and you feel like you have the plague - that's normal.
8. If your blood boils and the hairs in your nose curl when someone tells you "It was God's will" - that's normal.
9. If you can't talk about it but you can smash dishes, shred old phone books or kick the garbage can (preferably empty) down the street - that's normal.
10. If you can share your story, your feelings, with an understanding listener...another bereaved person - that's a beginning.
11. If you can remember their smile - that's healing.
12. If you find that your mirrors have become windows and you are able to reach out to other bereaved people - that's growing.

LONG TERM ILLNESS

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the death of your loved one, the death can be a blessing or a heartache. It may be both. If your loved one's illness was for a long period of time and was riddled with acute suffering you may feel that it is a blessing that death came when it did. You may have been given sufficient time to prepare emotionally for the end and to start to absorb the reality of the eventual succumbing to the reality of death. However depending on the nature of the illness and the high cost of health care, you may have some very deep-rooted reasons to be angry. Or you may just be angry because it is now over, and the loneliness is setting in.

I remember a young widow telling me that she loved looking after her husband when he was dying. They had a relationship of absolute and utter giving to each other. They felt, even when they were first married and when he was well, that they needed no one else to make their lives complete.

When his progressive debilitating disease brought indescribable pain and suffering, she suffered too. They insisted that he die at home. The medical staff gave them their blessing and so he was released from hospital. Nursing him at home and administering his medication, she felt useful and in control of her own life and his. This was contrary to how she felt in the hospital. With each day's suffering their love grew stronger; they enjoyed each other's company so much. When he died, she felt abandoned and angry.

In the grief support group she found others who had gone through similar circumstances. They would cry as they shared stories with one another. They would laugh at the mistakes they made and at the humour that their dying

partners had. The memories both good and bad bonded them together. That didn't take away from the fact that she would go into periods of depression. It became a hard and almost impossible task for her to get up in the morning. She lost weight, let herself go and would miss periods of work. This went on for a period of about six to eight months. She was on a roller coaster of anger and depression.

It was intense and it was torturous. She only missed about three sessions at the grief support group. She needed them and they in turn, needed her. They would always phone and just be there for her. Today, she often confirms that it was the support and love that she received from the group that got her through the tough times. They were her lifeline through the stormy seas.

SUICIDE

When my friend's son committed suicide, she felt as if she would never return to normal. And she never did. What she did though, was find a new life. That didn't happen until she went through some fairly hellish moments of anger and depression. She didn't know whom she was angry with, perhaps society itself. Eventually she realized that she was really very angry with her son for taking his life and leaving his family to cope with the loneliness of life without him. She joined a grief support group. She said that they were great and helped put her life into perspective.

A young widow, whose husband was found in the family garage with the motor running, told us this story. It was one of the young sons who found Dad. The anger she had was directed toward the deceased husband. How could he do that to her and the children? She said that for days, she would walk around the house and ask, "Why?" and would sink into terrible bouts of depression and despair. There was no one

to help her out. Her side of the family abandoned her and the boys. She had to cope on her own. She eventually sought individual counselling and then proceeded to a grief support group and somehow managed to get through the first year.

After the suicide of a loved one, you may feel exaggerated emotions of anger and intense guilt. You no doubt feel betrayed and rejected. After all, your loved one made a conscious decision to take his/her own life. You may feel as if you are to blame. If your suicidal loved one had been suffering physically or emotionally, you may feel relief after the suicide. This is all right. This means that you appreciate the termination of stress and pain. Again I would like to stress that nothing you could have done would have prevented that person from doing what he/she did once their mind was made up.

Remember that it was not your decision to end the life. You were not in control. These may seem like empty words right now. However, you need to realistically remember your loved one both positively and negatively. By doing so you can work through your anger and guilt. If the stigma of suicide is causing social or emotional isolation and your feelings of guilt and anger are very strong, you may need some assistance. A support group or individual counselling helped the two ladies in the cases mentioned above.

Hopefully you too will come to this decision. There is a support group in the area for those who are survivors of suicide. There is also counselling available. If you need more information, don't hesitate to contact me. My contact numbers are included in this booklet.

MISCARRIAGE

The time following a miscarriage is a tough time for adjustment for you and your family, as you try to deal with the death of your wee baby. Most people will have gone on with their lives and will fully expect you to do so too. Your family may be a pillar of strength and understanding; others may be a source of aggravation. Whatever the case, if you are feeling angry or depressed please read on.

As parents of the miscarriage, your grief is unique and quite different from those of your peripheral family. They were not as closely bonded as you were. They did not feel the life; therefore, don't be surprised if they don't feel the death. If you're the Mom, you were the vehicle or vessel carrying the baby. You were the one who shared your body with your baby and now you are not. You may be feeling not only the loss of your baby but also the loss of part of yourself as well. Whatever the situation, it is important that you talk about your experience.

Sometimes Moms feel that they just need to be alone. They all share stories of caring husbands for the first while but then feel abandoned, as their husbands seemed to get on with their lives while they were still in an emotional crisis. Anger towards their partner became very pronounced. Little did they know that their husbands were grieving too, differently, but grieving nevertheless.

Perhaps you are angry with family members, doctors, nurses, funeral directors, or even clergy. I have heard many a horror story of uncaring professionals who were callous in their deliverance of the death event. Whatever and whoever the anger is directed towards, it is healthy to inform them. It might help to make changes in your personal live, the medical world or the religious community.

Dads grieve too! If you are the Dad, you may be feeling as if all the attention is being focused on your wife. Many a father has remarked that it was his baby too. Numerous husbands have said that they would gladly change places with their wives if they could. If you are feeling sad, angry or depressed tell your partner. Sharing your feelings with her will strengthen your relationship. "Being strong" will only tend to isolate yourself.

As expectant parents you had hopes and dreams. You may feel as if those hopes and dreams are now shattered. Give yourself a gift. Talk to each other. Join a support group. Reach out in the midst of the darkness of your angry, stormy sea.

STILLBIRTH

You, who have had prior knowledge about the death of your child at birth, may have been more prepared than those who had not. Perhaps, because of the knowledge that your time with your baby was limited, there was a time for special culminated intensified bonding. Some say this is so.

Other Moms and Dads who have had this happen to them said that it was the best and the worst of times. Knowing that the baby probably would die at birth or at best, within the first couple of hours let them zero in on the baby and plan the funeral the way they wanted to. It did not however, lessen the pain that they felt after. Stillborn is the miracle of a birth that turned tragic. It still is an incredible shock to everyone involved.

The birth and the death were real for you. You may be feeling angry with many people involved in the death plans for your baby. Doctors, nurses, funeral directors and clergy are usually the people who the parents are angry with.

Medical staff who do not treat the stillborn as a baby still exist despite all the psychology taught in medical school. There are still funeral directors who do not explain the rights of the parents well enough. Sometimes there are uncaring clergy. It seems that some clergy, especially those who are unmarried with no children of their own, run away from young grieving parents. They tend to downplay the event. The truth of the matter is that they are very uncomfortable with the baby's death. Male clergy may feel utterly helpless and do not want to be seen crying. Or some have never had the chance to bond intimately with someone, let alone a baby. It is easier for them to ignore the situation than to face it. If you have been a victim of clergy apathy, I strongly encourage you to make an appointment with your clergy and make your feelings of anger and frustration known. They need to know.

Many a Mom and Dad become angry with friends or relatives who become pregnant while the grieving parents are still mourning. There is no rationale, except that they felt cheated and robbed of an event that should have been theirs. Eventually this feeling of rage diminishes. Some days will be much worse for you than others. It will take many months but eventually this feeling of intense anger subsides. For the Moms, your condition can be compounded by your physical condition. Medical staff may forget to tell you that your milk will still come in. It is a cruel reminder that you have no one to feed. Most hospitals encourage rocking and touching your dead baby. Take many photos. Save all the momentos: the footprints, the name bracelet, the ultra sound film. This will help your sanity as you ride the stormy sea to a rocky shore.

SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (S.I.D.S.)

If any one knows what anger or frustration is, parents who have experienced S.I.D.S. will know. Not only do they have these emotions to deal with, they also feel very guilty over the circumstances surrounding the death of their child. The suddenness of the death with no warning leaves the entire family overwhelmed. Here was a healthy child and then without warning, there was none. Sometimes anger is directed at the mother for leaving the child unattended. Remember there is no rationale when it comes to S.I.D.S.!

Because S.I.D.S. is such a controversial issue and because no one seems to know the real cause, the guilt and sense of self-blame are horrendous on the parents. They become victims of societal opinion and may find themselves isolated from friends and family. This leaves the family including siblings or any other surviving children bewildered. If the children are older they may think that Mom or Dad did not really want the baby. Talk it out with the children before it builds into a holocaust of passionate emotions.

Because the death is sudden and usually of unknown causes ("etiology unknown" is how the coroner might express it) you may have to deal with police, coroners and hospital personnel who are designated to protect the interest of your baby. This is not a pleasant scene. It will be painful for you to have to cope with this legal hoopla and insinuations that your child's death may have been caused by neglect. This will add to your already heavy burden of guilt, grief and anger, as you try to deal with the professionals on the "case."

I strongly urge you to join a S.I.D.S. support group. They may be found in the Yellow Pages or on the Internet.

ABORTION

As mentioned in the previous book, women have abortions for many reasons. They do not choose lightly. The choice to end your pregnancy may result in an eruption of emotions. If you have chosen to terminate your pregnancy because of congenital deformities, you may be lamenting the loss of your pregnancy but also grieving for the healthy baby that might have been. This traumatic time may be magnified because you may feel that you had no choice, thereby destroying your self-identity of a loving nurturing human being. You very well may be feeling a lot of anger. Moms and Dads have told me that they feel as if life has dealt them a nasty blow by singling them out as not being able to have a healthy family. Although they may feel as if they made the right decision, and are supported by family and friends, deep down the thought keeps haunting them that they and they alone made that decision. One Mom said that all of a sudden it hit her, "We had planned this pregnancy and now we were planning his death." The thought was overwhelming. Life was unfair!

The anger of an unjust situation along with the stigma that society places on those who have chosen abortion may leave you feeling despondent, unable to tell friends and family. This isolation and the inability to talk to people about your ordeal can lead to depression. Moms, especially, can get caught in an intense emotional entanglement leaving them with many physical symptoms such as headaches, nightmares and total exhaustion.

Men suffer also. In our grief support groups, men have spoken often of feeling bitter and virtually incompetent when it comes to being able to have a healthy family. They too feel the grief, but may express it differently than their partner.

If you and your partner are experiencing marital stress right now, please be gentle with yourself. This may persist for months but eventually it will disappear. Couples who persevere and work through this stressful time will find that their relationship usually becomes stronger and deeper.

For those of you who have chosen to abort your baby for economic, social or psychological reasons, you may be feeling these very same emotions. Some women have told me that they are angry with their partner who insisted that they end the pregnancy for whatever reason. Believe me, whatever the reason, each is living and experiencing their own hellish grief. If you are facing a difficult time now, try to find caring people who will help you through your initial phase of grieving. Find supportive family, friends, social workers, and grief counsellors or join a support group. These are wonderful resources to help you deal with the abortion issue in a confidential and friendly way.

YOUNG CHILD DEATH

Three months have passed and still your pain is sharp and deeply felt. Others have resumed the day to day business of getting on with their lives and here you are. The pain of loneliness is consuming you. You may be asking yourself why am I so angry? Why am I so explosive? Anger is a very complex emotion stemming from many other feelings experienced at the time. Anger is neither good nor bad. It's what you do with the anger that makes it good or bad.

At the time of the death of a child many mourners experience feelings of hate, blame, resentment, jealousy or guilt. Depending on the circumstances of the death, they may also be feeling frustration, helplessness or hurt. Explosive emotions are usually the result of an unrelenting desire to

restore life back to the way it was before the death. Most are not even conscious of doing this, and if questioned on this, they do not know why they are behaving in this manner. The truth of the matter is that these are our basic maternal and paternal instincts. Watch the animal world mourn the loss of its offspring. They react in a similar fashion. According to all those who write books on the grief process most contend that in order for healthy grieving to occur, it involves being able to temporarily protest the painful reality of the death of your young loved one. If the griever does not give permission from self or does not receive permission from others to protest, they very well may slide into a deep depression. Sometimes this may lead to the situation where the mourner has no desire to go on living. So how do you give yourself permission to express explosive emotions without the world thinking that you've become unhinged?

One young Mom shared this story with me. The recent death of their young infant son had left her devastated. She was so angry with everyone and everything. She had this compulsive urge to destroy something. She thought about the dishes that, a few years ago, she and her husband had picked up at a garage sale. She had her husband pack the dishes in the car, and made him drive her out to an old abandoned bridge. Once there, she walked under the bridge and proceeded to hurl the dishes against the concrete abutment. She cried and she hurled; she cried and she smashed. When she was finished, she felt empty. She also felt good.

On telling her story to us at our support group, she laughed and said, "Actually I am a very quiet person. I am neither destructive nor violent. And I know it sounds crazy, but after I finished, I really felt a whole lot better." Find someone who is supportive and will allow you to grieve openly, someone who will just listen and not judge.

ADOLESCENT CHILD DEATH

All of us in family structures have a role to fill. It seems that all families have a clown, a peacemaker, a hothead, a rebel, etc. When a teen dies, there is a shift in the family equilibrium. The teen has already played a large role in the family structure. Parents, siblings and grandparents will all grieve the teen's death differently. Each person will experience his or her own unique grief reaction. Expect the same, yet different responses from friends, teachers and acquaintances from any organizations that the youth belonged to.

Most families who have experienced a teen death have been tortured by anger. Anger is an explosive emotion. But anger can be healing. It is all right to be angry. Most of us become angry with other people, at the hospital or with staff who looked after our teen. Perhaps we could switch our focus of anger, and place it on the situation, rather than on ourselves, or on those who are trying to help us. Getting angry with ourselves only leads to depression. Getting angry with our family or friends only frightens them and makes them stay away. Being angry with the situation lends credibility to the unfairness of the circumstances surrounding the death. Expressing that anger in a healthy way helps us deal better with the entire episode.

How do you express anger in a healthy way? Some when faced with relentless anger, house-clean, rototill the garden, play tennis or as one father did, went to a batting cage and "hit the hell out of the ball."

Go down to a lake or river and hurl stones into the water as you voice your anger. One group of teenagers did precisely that, and after two hours of throwing stones and voicing anger they felt a lot better. Just don't hospitalize any humans or wild life!

Expect jealousy to set in; it is part of the grief reaction. Most parents tell me that they find it hard to watch a family with all of their children, including teens, who are enjoying life. Please be patient with yourself. This is a strong emotion. Like anger, it too needs to be addressed. It simply means that someone is hurting and hurting badly. To suffer a sudden death or terminal death of a teen is bad enough. But for the grief-stricken family to suffer while those around them are not suffering makes it worse. It is as if those who are not mourning are the "chosen few" or the "favoured ones."

Loneliness eats us alive. No matter what the activity or how many people are around, there is always that vacant void that someone is missing. Parents and siblings have told me that talking to those who are in like-grief situations helps. Hearing what other people say validates what you have been feeling. There is a support group in the area that you may want to attend. Remember grief is a process that is long-----life-long. Take care.

VIOLENT DEATH

Those who have experienced a death of a loved one through natural disaster such as an earthquake, flood, hurricane, etc., may find that combined with their anger, is the frustration and horror at the cause of death. Violent deaths may sometimes leave family and friends feeling helpless with nowhere to direct the rage that they may feel.

For those who have died from accidents, homicides, and war, however, the bereaved may find themselves definitely angry with the person or people who caused their loved one to die. Losing a loved one from an accident or disaster will have attached to it, its own type of stress. You may feel frustrated and powerless at the unfairness and injustice that such deaths bring.

This brings on the "if onlys."

IF ONLY'S

For both types of violent deaths, the Mother Nature induced and human nature induced, the "**if only's**" set in: **if only** she had taken the other airline, **if only** they hadn't decided to leave early, **if only** they had listened to the weather forecast before leaving etc.

The fact remains that the person you loved was killed under circumstances that don't make much sense and were unavoidable. Violent, mutilating and destructive deaths often leave survivors with a greater sense of helplessness and vulnerability. Sometimes the body of the deceased is so mutilated, that the casket must remain closed. If this happens, typically, there is a yearning or a feeling that the loved one did not really die. After all you did not see the dead body.

Friends of mine, a registered nurse (six weeks pregnant with her first born) and her young lieutenant navy husband, were coming home to Hamilton for a visit with family and friends. She had to work nights at a hospital in Halifax. He left the night before and boarded a Canadian Navy Tracker. On approach to Downsview Airport in Toronto, his plane suddenly went off the radar screen and crashed. His parents, having been invited earlier to the tower to watch, were horrified as they witnessed the holocaust before them. His wife was immediately flown home. In the years following, there were feelings of anger and frustration vented along with many "**if only's**."

Feelings surrounding violent deaths are many, too many to be mentioned in this tiny booklet. There are many dimensions to violent deaths, including the legal and insurance aspects. They may hinder your coping skills when it comes to coping with this type of grief.

If you feel the need to talk to someone who has survived similar circumstances and deaths, please call me.

Now that you have had time to catch your second breath after the funeral, your mind may start to wander to the "if only's." Most of us like to be in control of our lives. This often includes others' lives as well. Unfortunately sometimes we think we even have the power to control others' lives from the grave. We play powerful mind games on ourselves, trying to make some sort of sense of the death of our loved one. This is all part of the normal process of grief.

How often do you hear yourself say:

- If only we hadn't quarreled
- If only we had children or hadn't had children
- If only the rifles weren't loaded
- If only we had a chance to say goodbye
- If only we had retired earlier
- If only I had made him go to the doctor
- If only she had told me what was bothering her
- If only the pregnancy was normal
- If only she had not been drinking
- If only I had taken the car keys away from her
- If only I knew that she had forgiven me
- If only he had not been so overweight
- If only I had controlled the amount of pills
- If only I knew how to do C.P.R.
- If only I did not smoke or drink while I was pregnant
- If only he had not taken the drugs
- If only there wasn't a snow storm that night

This is part and parcel of the grief process and protestation is necessary. These thoughts, however, can drive you to madness. Please find someone who is sympathetic and a good listener. By ventilating and validating your thoughts over and over with a compassionate person, you will

learn to accept your past efforts as appropriate and adequate behaviour. You will soon realize that there was nothing you could have done to prevent the death circumstances from happening. In doing so, you will journey down the road to eventual healing and health. You will never get over the death of your loved one. You will learn to live without them. Learning to live without them is called grief.

COMPARING GRIEF

Often you will hear people comparing grief. Some think that a baby's death is worse than a child's death, or that the death from a long-term illness is not as painful as a motor vehicle accident. As long as there is no meter or measuring device to measure love, there will be no meter or measuring device to measure grief. The grief and the loneliness, the anger and the desolation felt by every death event is just as painful for the person grieving the death of a parent, as it is for the person grieving the death of a child. Never compare grief.

WHOSE PAIN IS WORSE?

Mary Ann Golomb

Whose pain is worse?

I lost my husband after only 15 months;

he lost his wife after 45 years.

He lived his dreams and now he has a lifetime of memories;

I did not have time to make my dreams come true

and the memories are far too few....

And yet.....I am still young and independent and
will one day dream again;

He is older now and was dependent on her and
his nightmare of loneliness has just begun.

Who will take care of him now?

Whose pain is worse?

My husband and I did not have time to start a family;
she was left with three sons.

Her husband lives on in the face of his children;
mine only live on in my heart.

She has people with whom she can share memories;
I am all alone....

And yet...I have time to grieve for myself and to heal;

She must now support her sons,
both physically and emotionally.

When will she have time to grieve?

Whose pain is worse?

My husband was taken from me without warning;
she knew for nine months that her son was dying.

She had the opportunity for one last hug,
one last kiss, one last "goodbye";

I never had a chance for a final word, a final embrace,
a final "I love you....."

And yet....I know my husband did not suffer long
and lived the life he wanted;

But she watched her once strong, active son
weaken and wither

As he was robbed of his strength, hopes, and dreams.

How does she feel now?

Whose pain is worse?

I was there when my husband died;
she was on vacation when her father died.

She did not have to hear the siren;
she did not see what I saw;

She did not stand by helplessly as doctors
struggled to bring him back to life....

And yet....I know I did what I could to save
my husband and I was with him at the end;

She doesn't know how long her father suffered alone
or if he cried out her name,
Or if things would have been different if she was home.
How much does she blame herself?

Whose pain is worse?
My husband died; her husband walked out on her.
She still has a chance for reconciliation and the hope
she will be reunited with him;
There is no chance for me to see my husband again
or to hear him again or to hold him again.....

And yet.....I know when my husband died
he truly loved me with all his heart;
She must deal with rejection and emptiness.
How will she feel if she sees him again?

Whose pain is worse?
To me, mine is worse; to you, yours is worse.
But why do we compare?
I'm hurting and so are you.

Please allow me to have my pain and
I will allow you to have yours.
Let me voice my anger and you can voice yours.
Let me release my guilt and you can release yours
Let me cry on your shoulder and you can cry on mine.
Let me have my grief and I will let you have yours.
And then, one day, let us smile and hug
and thank each other for being there.

Whose pain is worse?.....
.....Does it really matter?

CONCLUSION

There are many mysteries of the universe, many of which our human mind cannot understand. Death is one of those mysteries. Even though we know that all living things must die, we somehow don't expect it will happen in our lives, to those we love.

Death appears when we least expect it and when we most expect it. Death has no respect for age. It will attack both the young and the old, and anyone in between. No matter the circumstances, death, like stormy seas, will take, and leave in its wake, the survivors, and the grieving ones who mourn.

Anger and depression are all part of the emotions that accompany us on our journey of mourning and grief through these stormy seas. Eventually, storms run out of energy and dissipate. So too, this chaotic and overwhelming position that we find ourselves in, will eventually disappear, leaving us breathless and in search of rediscovering ourselves again.

Your sea will become less threatening and the enormous waves that once were menacing, will change into mild waving whitecaps. Your grief is moving you on.

In the next three months, I will be sending you your third booklet. If you wish to discuss any of the information found in this booklet, please get in touch with me. I am just a telephone call away.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cheryl McQueen is a Registered Nurse and a Grief Counsellor, with extensive experience in critical care, pediatrics, and psychiatric nursing. She is a graduate of St. Joseph's School of Nursing in Hamilton and obtained her Master's Degree from Regis College, University of Toronto.

Cheryl established Bereavement Services Support & Education in the Greater Hamilton area in 1988. In 1991, she joined forces with Richard Anderson of R.H.B. Anderson Funeral Homes Ltd. to provide follow-up to the bereaved in the Haldimand and Norfolk counties.

Since then Cheryl has facilitated many grief support groups including groups for children and senior citizens. She is also funded by Richard Anderson to provide grief education workshops and crisis intervention for schools, communities and the workplace.

She has developed and written many workbooks for the bereaved, including "Wee Kids Grieve 2" and "When Mom and Dad Separate" for children six to twelve years of age.

Cheryl's most recent publication, "When Someone Dies - A Kid's Book About Funerals and Feelings" is a colouring book explaining the funeral home procedure to children ages four to nine.

She resides in Dundas, Ontario with her husband Nairn and two sons, Mark and David.