



Navigating Adversity: Grieving With Hope

Tips & Tools

GENERAL TIPS

1. Identify and acknowledge the primary and secondary loss(es) you may be feeling. You can't grieve what you haven't acknowledged.
2. Facilitate and practice helpful mourning traditions, rituals, and processes.
3. Remember that grief and mourning exist on a continuum.
4. Grief is a process, not an event: It takes time, occurs in phases, and is expressed in different emotions.
5. Explore and develop healthy support systems.
6. Face the realities of the loss and adjust to a changed world.

Created by an IOCC Frontliner Advisory Group comprised of Orthodox clergy, licensed clinicians and counselors.

First Responder Focused



Acknowledge your grief: It's okay to hurt, be angry, etc. Feelings are normal. Grief can only exist with Love.



You are not alone: It is important for first responders to develop a relationship with a trusted person that "gets it" in order to have someone to talk with. Share your story (stories are sacred) and remember that sharing helps to make sense of your story.



Life will be different. Adjusting to the loss, processing emotions, letting go of how things were: these are part of the process.



Growth through Grief: Account for different perceptions of loss. How can we learn or grow from the loss we grieve? What is the silver lining? Readjusting and moving forward is not a betrayal of the loss and grief.



There may be a fear of being perceived as weak by feeling grief, but it's okay to feel this and to share it. "Jesus wept" when He knew Lazarus was dead; He was going there to raise Lazarus from the dead, but He still shared the family's grief and experienced their pain and cried with them.



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Faith Focused



We think of grief primarily with the death of a loved one. Grief, however, occurs when there is any significant loss. The first step is to acknowledge this and that the various emotions one goes through after a significant loss are often grief-induced.



Grief is a process. It's not linear but has many ups and downs. It is a process that takes time. That's okay. Be patient with yourself even though others might want to rush you.



When another is grieving, try to be there for them. Often one doesn't have to say anything, but just be present with the other person in their pain and grief. We don't have to "fix" another, we can just be there for them, be empathetic.¹



The Church rituals of: The Funeral and Mercy Meal, Memorial services at specified intervals, and on the 4 Saturdays of the Soul are very helpful for anyone going through grief and an opportunity to support those who are.² Similar corporate or personal prayer gatherings can be creatively incorporated on anniversaries or in the midst of one's own, a family's, a parish's, or even a nation's significant losses.



FAITH, HOPE and LOVE.³ One's FAITH in God produces HOPE that all things negative and even death — in Christ Jesus — is transformed to life, through God's eternal compassion and unending LOVE. Therefore, ALL things work to the good of those who LOVE God. (Romans 8:28). Therefore even painful, negative experiences, sicknesses, and even death, OVER TIME in the grief process, can be transformed to positive, blessed and life giving experiences through God who LOVES us.



Acknowledge that grief is more than death. Everyone is going through it and it looks different for each of us. We grieve with hope.⁴

1) Note the incredible empathy of Jesus in two Biblical miracles: The raising of the only son of the Widow of Nain, in Luke 7:11-17; and the Raising of Lazarus from the dead, from John 11:38-44. In the first miracle, Jesus encounters the widow mother in procession to bury her only son. He had compassion on HER, raised her son from the dead and handed him to her. The Greek verb used for compassion here and elsewhere in the New Testament is "evsplaknizome". It literally means that Jesus was moved from His very "innards", from the depth of His being with love and mercy. In the Raising of Lazarus from the dead, when Jesus encounters Lazarus' sister Mary-after Lazarus has been dead for four days-Mary wept. Seeing her pain and sorrow, Jesus also wept. He knew He was going to raise Lazarus back to life in a matter of minutes, yet so deep was and IS His love for her, and indeed ALL of us, that He wept, nevertheless. Let's try to follow His example.

2) The boiled wheat used in certain Orthodox traditions remembers the Gospel passage, "...Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces much fruit." (John 12:24), focuses on hope in everlasting life.

3) St. Paul shares in 1 Corinthians 13, that these three are the greatest virtues of life, the greatest of which is LOVE (agape). (v 13). He says in Romans 8, that NOTHING can separate us from the LOVE of God-not anything negative or even death. (8:35-39). And finally St. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians, "Brothers and sisters, I would not have you ignorant concerning those who are asleep that you may not grieve as others do who have no HOPE."(4:13).

4) Epistle from funeral service 1st Thessalonians.