

ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITH OUT YOUR LOVED ONE

Grief is the reaction we have to a loss...Mourning is the actual process of grief...the 'work' of grief, and mourning is affected by many things also. Individuals grieving the loss of the same person will not 'mourn' the same...because other factors are present, and are different for these individuals. There are various "Tasks of Mourning" however, as written by J. William Worden, common among people moving through their mourning:

1) Accept the Reality of the Loss

- There is a sense of disbelief initially for some people that what is happening is "real". They feel that they are waiting to wake up from a bad dream.
- Death must be accepted on both an intellectual and emotional level. The mourner begins to think about how their life has changed because of the death of the loved one.
- Traditional rituals, such as funerals, help the bereaved to begin to accept the death as real.

2) Experience the Pain and the Grief

- The intensity of the pain and the way it is experienced and expressed is different for everyone. It is impossible not to experience some amount of pain when someone very close dies.
- Friends and family sometimes are uncomfortable with the mourner's pain and may try to interrupt this task.
- Mourners may try to avoid this task by masking the pain through the use of alcohol or drugs, by idealizing the deceased, by avoiding reminders of the deceased, or by relocating or quickly getting into a new relationship.
- No matter how successful a mourner is in avoiding the pain, it eventually will come back again, maybe in the form of depression or when a new loss is experienced.

3) Adjust to World without the Deceased

- Adjusting to the new environment is dependent upon what the relationship was and what role the deceased played in the relationship. During this task, grief work may focus on coming to terms with living alone, raising children alone, facing an empty house, managing home maintenance and finances, and caring completely for oneself.
- It takes time and patience to figure out how to take over the deceased's roles. It is also during this task that the bereaved tries to make sense of the loss and tries to regain some sense of control over his or her life.
- It is important that regression to a state of helplessness, inadequacy or incapacity does not occur during this task.

4) Reinvest in your life.

- For many, this task is the most difficult to complete.
- During this task, the bereaved often finds the ability to invest emotionally in someone or something else. The deceased is not forgotten, nor are the memories that were shared, but instead, the bereaved finds enjoyment in life again.
- In this task, the bereaved do not "give up their relationship with the deceased, but find an appropriate place for the dead in their emotional life—a place that enables them to go on living effectively in the world." The deceased are never forgotten or replaced—but remain a part of the bereaved's ongoing life through memories or rituals.
- "The fourth task is hindered by holding on to the past attachment rather than going on and forming new ones. Some people find loss so painful that they make a pact with themselves never to love again."
- The mourner is not the same person he or she was, and he or she never will be the same again. With time and grieving, however, the pain will lessen, and the mourner redefines himself or herself.