

See the Good in Grief

Issue #023 • 03/01/2022



Good Grief!

Hello,

This month's installment is very personal to me for a lot of reasons. As such, it's been hard to write. Memphis is such a unique place and wonderful in many ways. I love it for all of those things – the grit, the grind, the heart. It's also a city that struggles with many systemic problems that we see every day – poverty, racial inequality, drug abuse, and violence. We would be remiss if we didn't address these issues and how they affect our griever, our staff, and me personally.

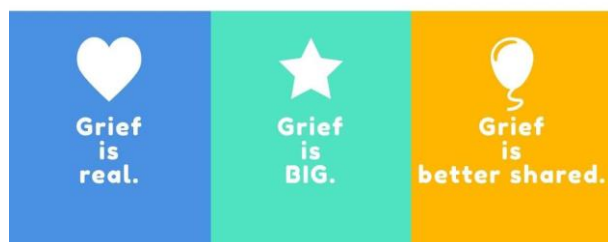
One of the driving forces behind the creation of the Good Grief program was my early experience during graduate training. I spent a year working in alcohol and drug treatment, and I noticed that every client I worked with had experienced, as a child, the death of a significant person in their life. As I scratched the surface, I learned that there was no professional support in place to help them cope with their grief. Recently, there has been a significant amount of research into what are known as "adverse childhood experiences" and how these affect long-term health outcomes. The death of a loved one is one of those experiences. Back then, there was almost no one helping these grieving children to identify their feelings and develop healthy ways of coping. We are privileged to be able to help bridge the gap that existed then with our services now. In January, we started a homicide-related grief support group that meets monthly. We hope that this group will meet a great need in our community.

It's important that we talk about these systemic problems and the impact they have on individuals, families, and communities. For, as we know, they are so often linked to grief and loss. And grief is the most universal experience there is – grief unites us all.

Sincerely,

Angela Hamblen Kelly, LCSW
Executive Director
Baptist Centers for Good Grief

Baptist Centers for Good Grief



Grieving a Loss by Homicide

Much like other types of traumatic loss, grieving a homicide is complicated. There are several concerns that are unique to this type of loss. One of those concerns is the reality that there is someone to blame. In the case of homicide, there is an actual person responsible for the death of your loved one. This awareness can create intense feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, anger, hatred, and confusion. Sometimes these feelings are directed at a person or place, and sometimes they just exist. Many times, there is a general loss of faith in people. How could another human do something like this? There are no easy answers.

Know that these intense feelings are all right and normal, but they do need some sort of healthy expression. Consider who you can be honest with about these intense and difficult feelings.



Another of the complicating factors that we consider is the time frame for coping with homicide loss. We know, and have said many times before, that the time it takes for reconciliation is unique to the loss, unique to the person. This remains true with homicide loss. However, the (potential) involvement of the criminal justice system can add further complications. The system is not really set up to protect the grieving person/family. The police are supposed to apprehend the perpetrators, and then the courts are supposed to hold them responsible. We are not naïve enough to believe that this is how easily it all works. Instead, sometimes the police are unable to apprehend the perpetrator, and there is no justice for the families. Other times, the perpetrator is apprehended but is tied up in court. Victims' families are forced in and out of the courts over and over for years while a case is being built and then brought to a jury. This back and forth creates chaos for the grief process. A griever may be coping well but then has to see the perpetrator or hear about their incarceration, causing the wound to be reopened. It draws out the grief process.

Take heart, this does not mean that those of you grieving a loss by homicide cannot cope or be all right in the moment. It simply means that there are aspects of your grief journey that will require care over time. Because of the complicated nature of this type of loss, it is important to have ongoing, long-term support. Courts have victim advocates to be with the family, and we also encourage you to seek your own supports (friends, professionals, anyone). Know that those of us that work at the Center are willing, able, and honored to be here for you and your family for as long as it takes.

Coping Skills Toolbox Series – Containment

Containment is a coping skill like many others that cannot be utilized in isolation. It is one of those that has to be used in conjunction with other skills because grief cannot be avoided indefinitely. What is contained needs to be processed and coped with appropriately in the long run. Be aware of that as you read about this particular skill.

Containment is just what it sounds like. It is a way of compartmentalizing difficult parts of your experience so they are “contained” and don’t escape into your life day to day, moment to moment. For some griever, this may include traumatic aspects of their loss, but this skill can also be utilized to manage grief that does not have trauma attached. Some people are natural compartmentalizers and do this in their lives without thinking about it (i.e. their grief is separate from work, separate from home, separate from family and friends – they can sort of naturally isolate it as a way of coping). Not everyone can do this naturally, however, and some people need a more deliberate skill to help with containment of their grief.

In your mind’s eye simply work on visualizing some sort of container. It needs to be something that can be sealed completely shut. Some people think of something large like a propane tank, and other people think of something smaller like a Tupperware container. There is no right or wrong – it just has to be a container. It may help to make a drawing or painting of your container with as much detail as you can. Add a valve opening to the container on the side with a tag that says “to be opened only when it serves my healing.” Once you have visualized this as clearly as you can, choose something that is causing you great pain and difficulty. It can be a thought, feeling, or image. Visualize what you have chosen as a cloud or some sort of fluid. Place it inside your open container. Then put the lid on it, seal it with however much force is needed, and shut the valve off for now.

If you do the containment but never turn the valve on and release it, it will not work. Your container will explode. You have to have times where you release that pain in safe spaces in order to cope with it.

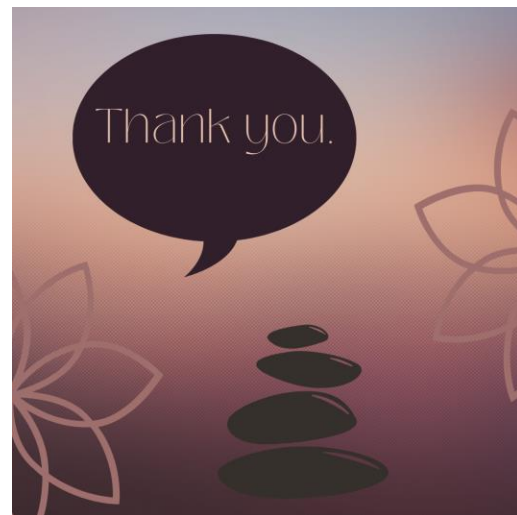


Be the Good in Grief

What are some of the words you might use to describe your counselor at the Center for Good Grief?

What are some of the feelings you associate with this person?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a social worker helps people cope in their everyday lives. We know just how hard this life can be and we also know how hard (and important) it is to find a safe person with whom you can share your feelings and emotions. We think our Center for Good Grief counselors are some of the best people in the world. They help children, teens and adults navigate a universal experience that many others would prefer to avoid.



I hope you can join me in celebrating all of our Baptist Centers for Good Grief staff in the month of March as we recognize Social Work & Counselor Month! Each day our staff works incredibly hard to ensure that each grieving person knows they are not alone. They see us. They hear us. They appreciate our unique circumstances and what is meaningful to us. They are beautiful souls who share a safe space for us to learn, grow, and develop into the people we want to be. They encourage us to thrive because they believe we can.

And we are grateful for them.

In honor of the time they lovingly spend with us, would you consider a special gift of \$130 in honor of your counselor or staff member at the Center for Good Grief? This is the average cost of an hour of therapy from a trained professional, and since we do not charge for our services, we rely on gifts from friends like you.

Be the good in grief today: scan the QR code, visit <https://baptistgriefcenters.org/give/>, or call 901-227-7123 to make a gift!



As always, you can like, comment, and share our messages on social media. Follow along on Facebook at *Baptist Centers for Good Grief – Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla's House* and *NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief*.

.....

Dates to Remember: Grief Support Groups

Adult Grief Groups

Homicide Grief Support Group– monthly virtual support group

March 15 from 5:00 - 6:30pm

April 19 from 5:00 – 6:30pm

Grief Support Group for Grieving Parents– weekly virtual support group series

March 24, 31, April 7, 14, 21 & 28

4:00 - 5:30pm

Registration Required:

TN/MS call 901-861-5656

AR/MO call 870-936-7719

Dates to Remember: Kaleidoscope Series

Educational and supportive virtual grief seminars provided by grief counselors for grieving adults.



March : Learning to Relax Your Body While Grieving – March 24 from 5:30-7:00pm

Relaxation is one of the many tools that can be used to help regulate the stress associated with grief. Learning to calm our mind and body is not always as easy as some would like to believe. In this seminar, we will examine the benefits of intentional relaxation from a mind-body perspective and discuss how relaxation can be a coping skill for grief. We will look at the ways in which relaxation can help you to create balance in your emotional experience so that you do not feel so overwhelmed and controlled by the intensity of painful thoughts and feelings. You will also have the opportunity to learn and practice a variety of relaxation techniques that you can use in your daily life to experience peace and calmness.

2022 Virtual Group Preview – more info to come

April: Teen Monthly Grief Support Groups

May: Monthly support groups begin for Suicide Loss; Pregnancy & Infant Loss; Alcohol & Drug Related Loss; Walking Grief Group & Grief Bible Study

June: Camp Good Grief & Putting Emotions Into Motion for children

Walking with Your Grief will begin in May. Grief manifests itself in many ways and we are often left wondering how to cope with it all. This easy-paced walking group offers participants an opportunity to express their grief through movement alongside others while connecting to the present moment through mindfulness walking. This walking grief group six-session series is not an exercise group, but rather an alternative to more traditional grief support groups for people who would benefit from expressing their grief in different ways.

2022 Virtual Seminar Preview – more info to come

April: Coping with Anger in Grief – April 19 from 4-5:30pm

May: The Importance of Self-Care in Grief – May 10 from 4-5:30pm

June: Grief & Your Body – June 23 from 12-1:30pm



Take Five!

Here are five resources to help you along your journey.

1. *Coping with Traumatic Death: Homicide* by Bob Baugher, PhD and Lew Cox, Victim Advocate
2. *After a Murder: A Workbook for Grieving Kids* – by the Dougy Center
3. Crime Victims & Rape Crisis Center – support services, court advocacy, and victims compensation –
<https://shelbycountyttn.gov/737/Crime-Victims-Rape-Crisis-Center>
4. “How Do I Support Someone After a Violent Loss?”–
<https://chicagosurvivors.org/how-do-i-support-a-survivor/>
5. *Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)* – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -
<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>





The Next Step

Setting Boundaries

We often hear from grieving people that they are flooded with unsolicited advice from others who are trying to help them. When you are grieving, people will try to tell you what to do, when to do, how to do. They will tell you that you need to stay busy, you need to slow down, you need to engage with people, or that you need to take a rest. Sometimes, it can help to limit this by setting boundaries.

At the end of the day, this is your journey, not anyone else's.

So, no matter what someone else thinks will help you, you are the best suited to decide.

This week, say no to someone who wants you to say yes.

Say yes to something that you want to do.

Being assertive is not the same as being rude.

Set a limit, put up a boundary – protect yourself from the expectations of other people.



CENTERS FOR
GOOD GRIEF

baptistgriefcenters.org

**KEMMONS WILSON FAMILY
CENTER FOR GOOD GRIEF**
1520 W. Poplar Ave.
Collierville, TN 38017

MILLA'S HOUSE
326 Ellsworth
Memphis, TN 38111

**NEA BAPTIST
CENTER FOR GOOD GRIEF**
1717 Executive Square
Jonesboro, AR 72401