



Grief & Share®



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### **Church Initiative: Providing help for people who are hurting**

Church Initiative, GriefShare's parent ministry, offers other resources to help people through life's challenges. Loss of a Spouse is a seminar for people who have been widowed. Surviving the Holidays is a seminar to help the bereaved make it through the holiday season. DivorceCare is a divorce recovery program for people who are hurting from a separation or divorce. DivorceCare for Kids is a program to help children of separation or divorce. To learn more about these resources, use the contact information above. We'd love to hear from you!

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# *Loneliness* & **Sadness**

The phone rings, and for a brief moment you think it might be your loved one. Friends and family invite you out, but it's easier to stay home than wear a smile you don't feel. The absence of your loved one stings in a million ways, but there are things you can do that will help soothe the pain.

In this week's video and Step by Step exercises you'll discover that:

- **Sadness can slow you down to assess where you're struggling & what might help.**
- **Sadness lessens as you make adjustments in your life.**
- **Making meaningful connections eases loneliness.**



# Video outline

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you may have while viewing the video.

## Responding to loneliness

Avoiding common temptations

Making connections

Drawing closer to God

## Responding to sadness

## **Facing a possible depression**

Common symptoms

Suicidal desires

**Approaching God in sadness**

SAMPLE

# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement



## Krissie's story

"I wanted to be alone; I thought the rest of my life would be like that. I almost found comfort in being alone. But as time went by and I was alone and kept myself in a dark room, I did start to feel isolated. It's hard to figure out how life still happens without your loved one."

*Sometimes it might feel easier or even comforting to be alone, but isolation can quickly turn into loneliness. This week you'll discover how meaningful connections can ease your loneliness and how alone time can be used to give your difficult feelings over to God.*



## It's hard to be around people

People may invite you to spend time with them. Part of you wants to go, but staying home just sounds easier. Then you won't have to "put on a happy face," deal with awkward comments, or confront a new reminder of your loved one's absence.

But you weren't made to be alone. In the Bible, God talks about Christian "fellowship." It's where friends get together to encourage one another—supporting and uplifting each other through life's ups and downs.

### God's message to you

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another."  
(Hebrews 10:24–25a)

**Describe any struggles you have with being around other people right now.**



Sheryl has been avoiding other people because she doesn't want to pretend to be happy. What practical things can she do to make it easier to be around others (e.g., at social events, church, work)? What are the dangers if she continues to isolate herself?

Today's Bible verses describe fellowship—God's design for friendship. What does He want friends to do when they get together?

## Remember

Fellowship helps relieve loneliness.

You can take steps to make it easier to spend time with others (e.g., attend church or an event with someone who will run interference for you).

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## Adjusting



**O**ne difficult thing has been our associations with former friends—the kids Emily played with, their parents, etc.” – Albert

“I don’t like to do yardwork, but it has to be done.” – Shay

As you make adjustments in your life after loss, there will be two main types of changes to consider.

**Relationships:** Death creates changes in your social network. You need other people in your life both to receive their help when you need it and, eventually, to offer them help when they need it. However, the people you reach out to might not be the ones you were closest to before your loved one’s death, but there are people out there who want to help. Such connections are a source of stability in your life.



**Roles/skills:** If your loved one lived (or worked) with you, you may need to change or expand your daily and weekly roles. This might mean learning new skills, such as handling finances, lawn care, or cooking. While learning new skills is challenging, it can also spark your continuing development as a person. Changing your roles will also be true if the person was someone you took care of (such as a child or a chronically ill person); you may find yourself at a loss because you suddenly have too much time on your hands.

Consider what adjustments are needed:

1. Think of someone you don't normally interact with who might be able to understand what you're going through.
2. What tasks or responsibilities did your loved one handle for you?
3. Who might be able to help you learn a new skill you'll need?
4. What roles did you have when your loved one was living that you no longer have now?
5. What might you be able to do that you didn't have time for earlier?



## Being real with God

*"To lament is basically to say to God, 'Let me tell You where I am right now.'" – Dr. Larry Crabb*

*"Lament is the honest cry of a hurting heart wrestling with the paradox of pain and the promise of God's goodness." – Mark Vroegop\**

### God's message to you

"I prayed, with hands lifted toward heaven, but my soul was not comforted. I think of God, and I moan, overwhelmed with longing for his help. ... I am too distressed even to pray! I think of the good old days, long since ended, when my nights were filled with joyful songs. I search my soul and ponder the difference now. Has the Lord rejected me forever?" (Psalm 77:2b–7a NLT)

**Have you avoided being completely honest with God about your grief? If so, why?**

\* Mark Vroegop, *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019), 26.

**Why do you think God wants you to know that godly people have cried out to Him and felt as if He wasn't listening?**

## Remember

Lamenting (pouring out your hurts to God) is a healthy thing to do. There are many examples of this in the Bible.

Getting real with God helps you connect and have a real relationship with Him.

## 4 I feel hopeless. What now?



**Y**ou had special plans with your loved one and looked forward to future days and events. Since the death, you may feel those dreams and plans have shattered. Maybe you're feeling abandoned or misunderstood by friends or family. Or you're in financial straits. Or you need to leave your home and move.

Trying to face all these difficulties at once is no doubt overwhelming. At times it may seem pointless or hopeless to go on, and suicide might seem like the only option. But it's not.

### Hope is possible

The comforting fact is, other people have gone through the struggles you're facing and made it to a place where the feelings aren't so intense. They've found help through seemingly impossible situations, and found guidance for making important decisions. Knowing that other people have been in this same place is an important reminder that hope is possible, even now.

What you need is a different point of view to see your way out of the darkness and chaos in your life. There is always someone to talk to about your struggle. And if you're feeling so hopeless that you're contemplating suicide, reach out for immediate help:

- Local police
- Doctor
- Fire department
- The nearest emergency room
- A pastor of a local church

Or call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: 988

## Healing through *Writing*

### Learning from solitude

Are you struggling with sadness or loneliness? Use these prompts to work through your feelings and reflect on what you're learning about yourself and God in this alone time.

**How has your loved one's death affected your relationships?**

**Have you struggled to unburden your heart since the death? What makes it hard to do so?**

**Write out your lament to God: Share with Him your hurt, anger, confusion, loneliness, etc.**

Place a check in the boxes to identify how you are feeling this week: emotionally, physically, etc.  
Or, even better, insert a word to describe how you are doing.

	BAD	OKAY	GOOD	GREAT
Emotionally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Physically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spiritually	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How your life is in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## My Healing

### Krissie's story

"At the end of the day when my kids have gone to bed and it's silent and I don't have anyone to talk to, I value that time of sitting in silence. I use that time for positive things, not just to go over everything I didn't have, but to remember and be thankful for the things I did have. I started praying this prayer that 'If it was just me and God at the end of the day, I would learn to be content with that.' And that's not how I feel all the time; I'm human. But I try to value that time of solitude and use it for good and not use it to bask in my loneliness and what I don't have."

Get tips to stay healthy  
while you grieve.



# How to Write a Grief Letter

People mean well in their attempts to comfort and support you, but they often don't know what to say or do. And maybe you're getting tired of hearing the question "How are you doing?" and repeating the same responses over and over again.

It's helpful to write your friends and family what we call a "grief letter"—to give them an idea of what you're going through and to guide them in how to interact with you in your grief. With a grief letter, you can explain in *one place* what's going on, how you're doing, and what types of things you find helpful (and unhelpful). You can then give or send the letter to multiple people at once.

## What to write

1. Direct your letter to your friends and family.
2. Briefly describe your experience and your feelings.
3. Let people know what they can expect from you.
4. Tell them what they can do and say that you'd find helpful—and what's not helpful right now. (People won't be offended if you tell them exactly how to help. They will appreciate your clear instructions.)
5. Don't forget specific prayer needs. If you're not sure what to ask, you could ask them to pray that you will draw closer to the Lord and find deep, inner peace; that you'll be able to extend help and support to others; and that you'll experience a strength you've never had before. Ask them to pray for the constant assurance that you're not alone.

## Sharing your letter

There are several ways to share your letter. As your needs change, you can send a new one.

**Email or text:** Send the letter as a text, email, or email attachment.

**Printed copies:** Mail these or pass them to people in person.

**Social media or blog:** You could post the letter or record a video of yourself reading the letter. (Keep in mind how it might be reshared. Be sure to limit this to trusted friends.)

If you don't have energy to write, ask someone to help. Specify what you want written and have that person pass it out to your friends and family. You could also ask your church leaders for ideas about how you could share your letter with the congregation.

## Sample grief letter

H. Norman Wright shares this sample grief letter in his book *Recovering from Losses in Life*.

Dear Friend (family, pastor, fellow workers ...),

Recently I have suffered a devastating loss. I am grieving, and it will take a while to learn how to live with my loss. I wanted to let you know that I will cry from time to time. Tears are not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. They are God's gift to me to express the extent of my loss.

At times you may see me angry for no apparent reason. Sometimes I'm not sure why. All I know is that my emotions are intense because of my grief. If I don't always make sense to you, please be patient with me. And if I repeat myself again and again, please accept this as normal.

More than anything else, I need your understanding and your presence. You don't always have to know what to say, or even say anything, if you don't know how to respond. Your presence and a touch or hug lets me know you care. Please don't wait for me to call you since sometimes I am too tired or tearful to do so. If I tend to withdraw from you, please don't let me do that. I need you to reach out to me over the next several months.

Pray for me that I would come to see meaning in my loss someday and that I would know God's comfort and love. It does help to let me know that you are praying for me. If you have experienced a similar type of loss, please feel free to share it with me ...

This loss is so painful, and right now it feels like the worst thing that could ever happen to me. But I will survive and eventually recover ...

Thank you for caring about me. Thank you for listening and praying. Your concern comforts me and is a gift for which I will always be thankful.

You can also use a grief letter to communicate specific things you need help with (housework, yard, maintenance, child care, etc.). See "How to Ask For and Accept Help" on page 44.