



COPING WITH GRIEF FOR MILITARY & VETERAN FAMILIES

BY LATOYA HARDIN

WHAT IS GRIEF?

What we will cover in lesson 1:

- Definition
- Types of Loss
- Types of Grief



MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY DEFINITION :

Definition of *grief*

- **1a:** deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement
His grief over his son's death
b: a cause of such suffering
life's joys and griefs
- **2a:** TROUBLE, ANNOYANCE
enough grief for one day
b: annoying or playful criticism
getting grief from his friends
c: an unfortunate outcome : DISASTER —used chiefly in the phrase *come to grief*
d: MISHAP, MISADVENTURE
- **3obsolete :** GRIEVANCE SENSE 2



OXFORD DICTIONARY DEFINITION :

Definition of *grief*

- **1.** [uncountable, countable] a very sad feeling, especially when somebody dies

She was overcome with grief when her husband died.

They were able to share their common joys and griefs.

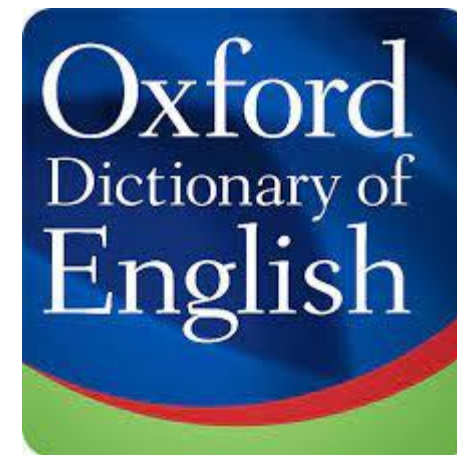
grief for somebody/something *her grief for her dead husband*

grief over something *grief over the loss of friends*

grief at something *He could not hide his grief at her death.*

- **2.** [countable, usually singular] something that makes you feel very sad
It was a grief to them that they had no children.

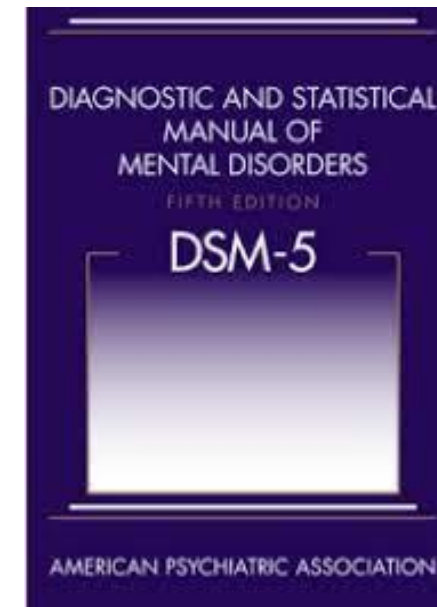
- **3.** [uncountable] (informal) problems and worry
He caused his parents a lot of grief
Such behavior can cause considerable grief.



DSM DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA:

Prolonged grief disorder was recently added to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), a volume published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) that defines and classifies mental disorders.

- It can happen when someone close to the bereaved person has died within at least 6 months for children and adolescents, or within at least 12 months for adults.
- In prolonged grief disorder, the bereaved individual may experience intense longings for the deceased or preoccupation with thoughts of the deceased, or in children and adolescents, with the circumstances around the death.
- These grief reactions occur most of the day, nearly every day for at least a month.
- The individual experiences clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.



DICTIONARY OF *LIFE*:

Life's Definition of *grief*

- **1:** the process by which a person adjusts to the physical absence of someone or something with whom they continue to have a psychological or spiritual connection.
- **2:** an ongoing & evolving experience involving cognitive, emotional, physical and behavioral response to loss.
 - *Loss may be direct loss of an object or individual, secondary loss, stressors, loss of the self, loss of beliefs, loss of safety, loss of security and loss of worldviews.*



ANY LOSS CAN CAUSE GRIEF, INCLUDING:



Loss of Friendship



Loss of Health



Loss of Job



Death of Loved One



Loss of Pet



Divorce or
relationship breakup



Loss of Financial
Stability

WHAT DEFINES A LOSS?

For military families grief becomes a revolving door of losses.

- Loss of civilian identity, friends and family when enlisting into the military
- Loss of fellow service members during combat
- Loss of identity of ableness when services members are wounded in combat.
- Loss of family, friends, classmates and coworkers with military moves every 2-3 years.
- Loss of family connectedness with services members frequent 6-12 month long deployments.
- Loss of identity, military family and financial stability after leaving the military.

1

Death of loved one or friend.

2

Terminal illness of a loved one or friend.

3

Sudden loss of a fellow military service member during combat.

4

Loss of family connections during military deployments.

5

High rates of divorce and infidelity.

6

Loss of a personal relationship, close friendships, and mentorships during frequent military reassignment moves.

7

Loss of identity or financial stability after leaving the military.

COMMON TYPES OF LOSS EXPERIENCED IN MILITARY FAMILIES

COMMON TYPES OF GRIEF

Anticipatory

Normative

Complicated/Prolonged



ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

Anticipatory grief is grief that begins before a loss occurs.

People dying of terminal illness go through it, as do their loved ones. When doctors tell people they only have a limited amount of time to live, they start to review their lives and reflect on whether they have any unfinished business to address, like a meaningful conversation or unmet life goal.





NORMATIVE GRIEF

Normal grief refers to a wide range of reactions to loss. Some people are more open and demonstrative, while others express grief indirectly. The important factor that separates healthy from unhealthy grief is whether the grieving person can cope with what they feel and ultimately accept the loss.

Variations of normal grief can include:

- Inhibited Grief
- Masked Grief
- Delayed Grief

These forms of grief can reflect personality differences or practical needs. For example, some people may inhibit or delay their expression of grief until specific tasks are complete, such as planning a funeral, updating living arrangements or addressing the provisions of a will.

Others may not be comfortable showing others how vulnerable they feel. These responses are healthy as long as a person can eventually find a way to express their authentic feelings and learn how to live with the loss.

COMPLICATED OR PROLONGED GRIEF

Complicated grief disorder, also called prolonged grief disorder, refers to persistent, severe emotional reactions that occur in response to certain kinds of loss.

Prolonged grief disorder happens when someone loses someone close, and they experience an intense yearning/longing for or preoccupation with the deceased person. Their bereavement lasts longer than social norms and causes distress or problems functioning.

Chronic and prolonged grief are periods of grief that can last for years. They are more likely to arise from traumatic loss. These painful forms of grief can cause major depressive episodes and require specialized mental health treatment.



COMPLICATED OR PROLONGED GRIEF



- People who lose a loved one to suicide experience complicated grief twice as often as other bereaved people.
- People whose loved ones die from acts of violence often require counseling to help them process this difficult loss and the chronic grief that can follow. Some people who lose a loved one to violence overcome complicated grief and find meaning by committing themselves to a related cause and working to ensure others don't have to suffer what they did.
- The term ambiguous loss describes the complicated grief that arises from losing a loved one to dementia. The loved person is still there physically, but psychologically absent, making it hard to recognize the loss.
- Military affiliated families are more likely to experience traumatic grief given the high risk for exposure to traumatic events as well as significant, sudden, and violent losses. Complicated grief (traumatic grief) tends to be diagnosed in conjunction with PTSD among service members.

COMPLICATED OR PROLONGED GRIEF SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of complicated grief include the following:

- Feeling angry or bitter
- Feeling dazed or emotionally numb
- Wanting to die to join the deceased
- Being in disbelief or unable to accept a loss
- Feeling prolonged, intense sadness and yearning
- Avoidance of reminders that the person is dead
- Ruminating on the circumstances surrounding the loss
- Feeling like life is meaningless, senseless or profoundly unfair
- Identity disruption (e.g., feeling as though part of oneself has died)
- Intense emotional pain (e.g., sorrow) related to the loss
- Difficulty with reintegrating back to normal routines
- Intense loneliness (i.e., feeling alone or detached from others)



REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425596>
- Barboza, J., & Seedall, R. (2021). Evaluating the relationship between family resilience and grief-related symptoms: A preliminary analysis. *Death Studies*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2021.1993381>
- Crunk, A. E., Burke, L. A., & Robinson, E. H. (2017). Complicated grief: An evolving theoretical landscape. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 95(2), 226–233. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcad.12134>
- Kaplow, J. B., Layne, C. M., Saltzman, W. R., Cozza, S. J., & Pynoos, R. S. (2013). Using multidimensional grief theory to explore the effects of deployment, reintegration, and death on military youth and families. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 16(3), 322–340. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-013-0143-1>
- Luben, P., & Silver, R. (2019, March). *Grief in veterans: An unexplored consequence of war*. American journal of public health. Retrieved April 17, 2022, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30726138/>
- Mancini, A. D., & Bonanno, G. A. (2009). Predictors and parameters of resilience to loss: Toward an individual differences model. *Journal of Personality*, 77(6), 1805–1832. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2009.00601.x>
- Rosenblatt, P. C. (2019). Family resilience in dealing with grief and loss. *Promoting Resilience*, 108–113. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429057298-15>
- Sirrinc, E. (2021, April). *Anticipatory grief*. <https://www.hopeandgrief.com/>. Retrieved March 10, 2022, from https://f.hubspotusercontent40.net/hubfs/6951996/001460-Grief%20Summit/Anticipatory%20Grief_ZNM057990.pdf
- Titelman, P., & Reed, S. K. (Eds.). (2018). Chapter 19 Family Reaction to Death. In *Death and chronic illness in the family: Bowen Family Systems Theory perspectives* (1st ed., pp. 335–348). essay, Routledge.
- VA Office of Research and Development. (2014). *Treatment of prolonged grief disorder in combat veterans*. Treatment of Prolonged Grief Disorder in Combat Retrieved March 2, 2022, from <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02283333>
- Worden, J. W. (2018). *Grief counseling and grief therapy: A handbook for the mental health practitioner*. Springer Publishing Company, LLC.
- Zandvoort, A. (2012). Living and Laughing in the Shadow of Death: Complicated Grief, Trauma and Resilience. *The British Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 9(2).