

## Operation Corps Strong Initiatives

# Grief and Loss Support Guide

presented by

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# Our Members

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# Objectives

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- ▶ Provide education about grieving process
- ▶ Provide guidance on how to manage symptoms of grief
- ▶ Provide guidance on how to assist Officers who may be grieving
- ▶ Provide easily accessible resources



# What is Grief?

- ▶ Grief is the normal and natural response to loss, a universal human experience. There is no limit on grief. Grieving is not a weakness, it's a necessity.
- ▶ Those who grieve typically transition through several stages. These stages may not occur in order, and the stages can last for months or years after a loss.



# Grief Symptoms

- ▶ **Physical** expressions of grief often include [crying](#) and sighing, [headaches](#), loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, [weakness](#), [fatigue](#), feelings of heaviness, aches, pains, and other stress-related ailments.
- ▶ **Emotional** expressions of grief include feelings of sadness and yearning. But feelings of worry, [anxiety](#), frustration, anger, or guilt are also normal.
- ▶ **Spiritual** expressions of grief may include questioning the reason for your loss, the purpose of pain and suffering, the purpose of life, and the meaning of death. After a death, your [grieving process is influenced by how you view death](#).



# Stages of Grief

## Stages of the Grief Cycle

### "NORMAL" FUNCTIONING



#### Shock and Denial

- Avoidance
- Confusion
- Fear
- Numbness
- Blame

#### Anger

- Frustration
- Anxiety
- Irritation
- Embarrassment
- Shame

#### Depression and Detachment

- Overwhelmed
- Blahs
- Lack of energy
- Helplessness

- Empowerment
- Security
- Self-esteem
- Meaning

### RETURN TO MEANINGFUL LIFE



#### Acceptance

- Exploring options
- A new plan in place

#### Dialogue and Bargaining

- Reaching out to others
- Desire to tell one's story
- Struggle to find meaning for what has happened



# Examples of Grief

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- ▶ Loss of a spouse, partner, child, friend or pet
- ▶ Serious illness of self or loved one
- ▶ Separation, divorce or loss of a relationship
- ▶ Loss of a job



# Grief Warning Signs

- ▶ Extreme avoidant behavior
- ▶ Lack of self-care
- ▶ Prolonged denial
- ▶ Self-destructive thoughts
- ▶ Displaced anger

“How are you?”

Broken. Useless. Alone. Clueless.  
Confused. Betrayed. Fragile. On the verge  
of tears. Depressed. Anxious. About to  
break down. Really, really give up. Pathetic.  
Annoying. I'm just a burden. Distant.  
Lonely. Bitter. Heartbroken. Lonely.  
Rejected. Crushed. I feel like I'm going to  
just fall apart at any moment. Empty.  
Defeated. Never good enough.

**Fine.**





# Coping Strategies

## ADAPTIVE COPING

- ▶ **Share your feelings**
  - ▶ Mutual support can help everyone get through the grieving process.
- ▶ **Important items can wait**—give yourself time before making big life decisions
- ▶ **Don't let work overwhelm you**
  - ▶ Ask your supervisor about shifting workload temporarily
  - ▶ Take adequate time off
- ▶ **Take advantage of employee assistance programs**

## MALADAPTIVE COPING

- ▶ **Shutting down emotionally**
- ▶ **Becoming “workaholic”**
  - ▶ Trying too hard not to lose themselves in their work risk burnout, a state of intense mental and physical exhaustion.
- ▶ **Overeating**
- ▶ **Drinking alcohol**
- ▶ **Taking prescription drugs**



# How to Assist

- ▶ Listen and support
- ▶ Don't expect the person to reach out to you or tell you what they need
- ▶ Talk through decisions—be a sounding board for your friend
- ▶ Be present and available
- ▶ Help with responsibilities



# How to Assist

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- ▶ Don't be afraid to say the name of the deceased
- ▶ Remember that time does not heal all wounds—be patient
- ▶ Remind the bereaved to take care of themselves
- ▶ Avoid judging—let them know you support them
- ▶ Share a meal
- ▶ Make a list of the bereaved's responsibilities and find help if there are many
- ▶ Make a personal commitment to help the bereaved through this, one day at a time.



# Resources

<u>Resource</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Website</u>
Federal Occupational Health Employee Assistance Program	800-457-9808	<a href="http://www.foh4you.com/">http://www.foh4you.com/</a>
TRICARE East	800-444-5445	<a href="https://www.tricare-west.com/">https://www.tricare-west.com/</a>
TRICARE West	844-866-9378	<a href="https://www.tricare-east.com/">https://www.tricare-east.com/</a>
Psychological Health Resource Center	866-966-1020	<a href="https://www.pdhealth.mil">https://www.pdhealth.mil</a>
Corps Cares Manager	240-276-9616	
National Suicide Prevention Hotline	800-273-8255	<a href="https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/">https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/</a>



# Resources

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**Mood Coach** - Mood Coach is an app for Veterans, Service members, and others to learn and practice Behavioral Activation. This app is designed to help you boost your mood through participation in positive activities. You can make a plan with positive activities and track your progress.



**Moving Forward** - Features problem-solving therapy (PST) tools designed to teach skills for overcoming life problems. PST is an evidence-based cognitive behavioral tool for depression and other distress.



**Virtual Hope Box** - The Virtual Hope Box (VHB) is a smartphone application designed for use by patients and their behavioral health providers as an accessory to treatment. The VHB contains simple tools to help with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.



# Questions and Answers



*Questions after today?*

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