



THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

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Dealing With A Significant Loss

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Although most losses are inevitable, losing a spouse, child or parent and/or enduring a chronic illness are especially traumatic. Losses of financial resources such as a job layoff, a foreclosure on a home, loss of a steady income, life savings or equity in investments are all devastating. As two wars wind down and warriors return, many are dealing not only with losses of physical and mental disabilities, but are unable to find work. Physical or mental illness takes its toll when any loss occurs. Some losses can be foreseen and we are able to take prevention measures to cushion the blow such as adequate insurance coverage. However, most losses catch us unaware and we feel "blindsided" and cheated. Some people have a built-in resilience and can eventually cope with losses. Others are not so fortunate and need assistance to help them grieve and ultimately recover.

*If you are a **Care Giver** (usually a family member or close friend):*

Be there to **listen** and provide support at a time when your loved one is vulnerable.

The person suffering a loss is probably traumatized and in shock. Do not offer advice unless asked and **refrain from offering platitudes** that this was "God's will."

If your loved one is highly distressed, **ask for permission to call the family doctor** for some medical advice. A mild sedative might be prescribed so that your loved one can get some rest.

Offer to perform household chores, clean house, prepare meals, run errands, take phone calls and answer the door.

Protect the privacy of your loved one if they are not up to receiving callers.

If your loved one is a religious or spiritual person, **request permission to contact their minister**, imam or rabbi.

*If you are a **Care Receiver** who has suffered a significant loss:*

1. **Accept support and assistance from your close family members and friends.** They love you and will do things for you that you don't feel like doing for yourself.
2. If you need **privacy** and time for yourself, say so. Callers can come back another time when you are up to seeing them.
3. **Guilt, shame, anger and/or regrets** are common feelings and it is normal to experience these feelings when you have suffered a huge loss.
4. Allow yourself **time to grieve** your loss. Tears and/or anger are expected and understood by those who love you. Sharing your feelings with your pastor, a professional counselor, a close family member or a friend will be helpful.
5. **"Stuffing" your feelings** is not a healthy way to deal with loss. When you feel ready, join a grief support group or contact a mental health professional who can help you process your loss and achieve some inner peace.
6. Although the need for privacy is important, **social isolation is not healthy.** If friends or family members call and offer to take you to dinner, go even if you don't feel 100 percent. Sometimes friends and family go on with their lives and don't call as often, so it is important to reach out to them.

If you are grieving a loss, there is help for you to take time to reflect and arrive at self-forgiveness. The Institute of Healthy Families of North Texas offers a 30-minute consultation at no charge so you can determine if we are the right counselors for you and so we can determine if we have the resources to assist you.

For information and to learn more about our counseling services go to our website at www.texasicounselors.com or e-mail Dr. Sandra Froese at swfroese@sbcglobal.net.