

WHAT IS COMPLICATED GRIEF?

Complicated grief results when the grieving process is blocked. There's a wide range of normal ways to move through grief. But in complicated grief, a person becomes stuck in some part of the process. The healing process stops or never begins. This can lead to other serious problems such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Physical illnesses
- Alcohol and other drug problems
- Increased risk of suicide.

Some forms of unresolved grief or complicated grief are:

ABSENT, DELAYED OR INHIBITED GRIEF... the person may not show any feelings of grief until 2 weeks (or more) after the loss. The feelings may seem less intense or be unresolved. (Or, they may not be apparent at all.)

DISTORTED GRIEF... One or more grief reactions become very exaggerated. For example, the person may only be able to feel and show anger for an extended period of time. The anger blocks out other feelings, such as sadness.

CHRONIC-GRIEF... The person never accepts the loss. He or she may stay stunned or preoccupied — with the loss for months or years — as if the loss just happened. Or the person may be "frozen" in time — for example, never canceling subscriptions or keeping the loved one's room exactly as it was before the death.

ARE YOU AT RISK? Some factors that can put a person at risk for complicated grief are listed below. Check any that apply to you. Having a risk factor does not automatically mean you have a problem. It means you should be extra alert and get professional help if you have any questions about your healing process.

The circumstances of the death:

- The death was violent or sudden.
- The death followed a very lengthy illness.
- You lost a child.
- You feel that the death was preventable.

Other factors:

- You had a difficult relationship with the person you lost.
- You have other major losses or stresses in your life.
- You have a history of unmanaged stress, depression or other mental health problems.
- You feel that you don't have the support you need.

WHEN THE DEATH WAS VIOLENT OR SUDDEN, OR INVOLVED A CHILD:

Your grief is likely to be more painful and lengthy if the death was sudden or violent (such as death resulting from a suicide, homicide or car crash), or if you lost a child.

If you have any of the struggles or symptoms identified above, you are strongly urged to acquire help from a grief counselor who specializes in your kind of loss.

* This summary is provided compliments of **Roy B. Nash, M. Div., LMFT, LCPC**, a Marriage and Family Therapist and Pastoral Psychotherapist, serving in United Methodist endorsed Chaplaincy and Counseling Ministry called **Belief-focused Care & Healing**, 5004 Eagle Ridge, Springfield, IL 62711-7830. Phone: 217-415-2978. www.roynash.com .