

Khululeka

grief support for children and youth

Understanding Grief

Children and teens have been called the “forgotten mourners” for good reason. Adults can be so caught up in their own grief that it is difficult for them to be available to help children with their grief. Adults may also think that children are doing fine because they “appear” to be. Grief can be very confusing for children and especially for teens, who are already at a difficult stage in life.

Grief does not go away – ever. But we can help children and teenagers develop healthy ways of dealing with the pain.

First we must understand our own grief, our own losses, come face to face with the pain, before we engage in trying to assist children.

Death affects us all sooner or later. We will all experience loved ones die. How we deal with death truly affects our lives. Grief is a part of our lives must be processed when the death occurs or it is left to some later time. This affects who we are and how we act.

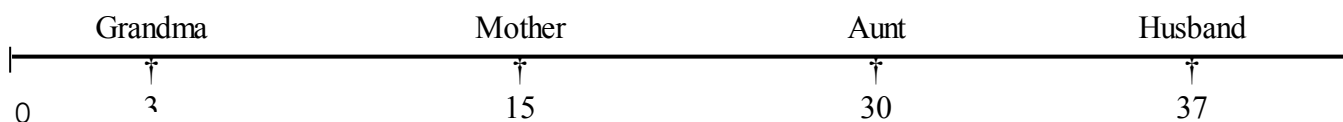
There is no one right way to deal with grief. But we all must allow our selves to experience the pain of loss.

Understanding your own way of grieving

On the following pages you will find a few exercises that will help you get in touch with your own grief and understand your own grieving process better.

Loss line

Draw a line horizontally on a peace of paper, starting with your birth, ending today and mark the years when you have lost someone. (concentrating particularly at losses you have experienced as a child and how you felt then)



Ask yourself the following questions:

How did you feel?

What was helpful to you?

What made things more difficult?

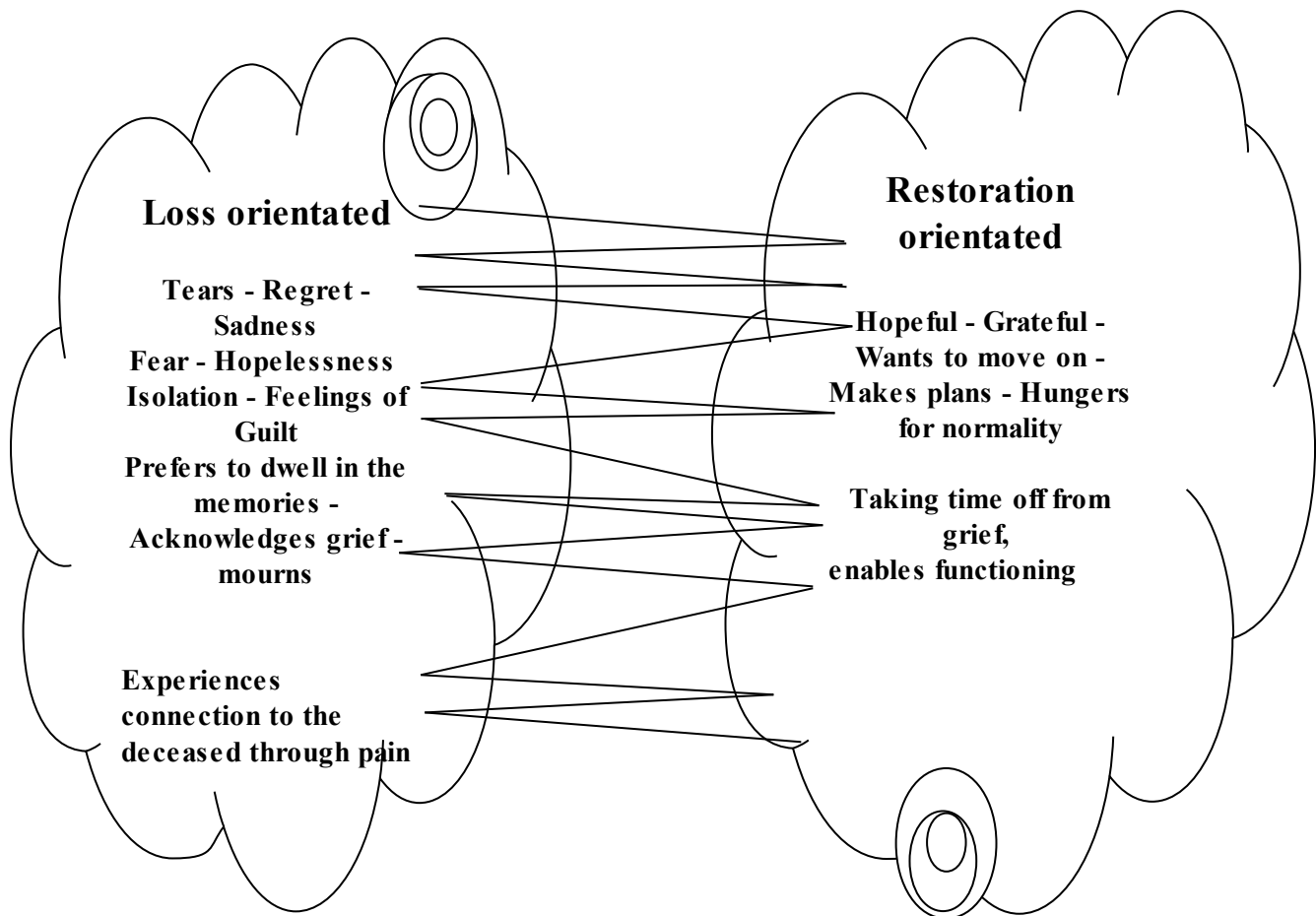


More information on www.Khululeka.org

Switching between modes

Some people experience that their emotions are switching rapidly and it feels very up and down and confusing. There are some moments where they are happy and then suddenly very sad again.

They switch between two modes:



(Stroebe 1994)

How often we switch and how long we stay in each field is very different from person to person.

Some people prefer to stay in one field more and longer, others move rapidly between these two.

For parents who have lost a child it is particularly difficult if partners move at different times in different fields.

Children move more rapidly between the two. As time goes on most people stay more in the restoration field, than in the loss field, but still going back occasionally.

Both fields are necessary to process the pain.

This also shows you there is no way that is right for all.

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