

Grief Notes

January 2025

We Grieve in Our Own Way by Linda Hopkins, Bereavement Coordinator

Have you wondered if you are grieving normally? Have you questioned, “Is it wrong that I have not cried?” or “Why can’t I stop crying?” or “What’s wrong with them that they are not talking about it? Don’t they need to let it out?” Grief has a powerful effect on us, and it is natural to question how to handle it and to figure out how to cope.

You may have heard that grief has stages. Having read Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’ book *On Death and Dying* decades ago, I am familiar with the stages Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance that she observed on interviewing people with a terminal diagnosis.

These stages are widely known in our culture and for many years have been applied to grieving the death of a loved one. One of the problems with focusing on stages is that if a person is not experiencing them as expected or described, they or others in their lives may think something is wrong. Other bereavement researchers have described tasks to be accomplished over time by the bereaved.

I appreciate describing stages and tasks for the bereaved as an attempt to understand what is happening to us as we grieve. With understanding we regain a bit of control. For most of us it was hard to accept the lack of control we had over whatever caused the death of our loved one. We would like to have some control over our grief

individuality of one’s grief journey. The intuitive style of grief is one of being openly emotional, sharing feelings, talking about what one is going through. One may also process their emotions through creative activities or practices such as journaling. In contrast, the instrumental style of grief is not openly emotional. It is

more apt to involve private thoughts and to be displayed through actions accomplishing things that need to be done following a death. Problems are addressed and taken care of. Most of us live with a blend of these styles and are not living at either extreme. I hope with understanding we can

avoid being judged by ourselves or others as not grieving “right,” and we can be okay with grieving in our own way.

You will find contact information for Northern Light grief support on the other side of these letters. If you feel need for more support, please reach out to your bereavement coordinator.



journey, and it is frustrating to accept it as the individual process that it is, with problems beyond sadness, with good and bad days, and without a clear time frame.

I have appreciated the work of bereavement specialist Dr. Kenneth Doka regarding what he describes as intuitive versus instrumental styles of grief. It helps me in understanding the