




IS THIS NORMAL?

1 SESSION

YOU WAKE UP AND THE GRIEF IS STILL THERE; thirty minutes later you're still at the bathroom sink, toothbrush in hand. You can't remember your coworker's name ... again. Tears come without warning. The knife in your heart twists and turns. Other people just don't get it; they go about their days as if nothing has changed. How long is it going to be like this? *I don't know if I can make it through*, you worry.

As you view this week's video and complete the daily **FROM MOURNING TO JOY** exercises and **MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK**, you'll begin to see:

-  Why your grief experience is harder than you imagined
-  Why the intensity and duration of your emotions are normal and appropriate
-  Despite how you feel right now, there is reason for hope

VIDEO OUTLINE

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you have while viewing the video.

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Intense and chaotic

"Am I losing my mind?"

Something we hide

A proper response to loss

"God doesn't expect us to put a plastic smile on a broken heart." –Dr. Stephen Viars



Something Jesus did

PERMISSION TO GRIEVE

Honestly express your emotions

Don't suppress your feelings (Psalm 61:1–2, Matthew 5:4)

Consequences of suppressing grief

THE INTENSITY OF GRIEF

A tangled ball of emotions

The pain won't last (Ecclesiastes 3:4)



"God values authenticity." –Dr. Stephen Viars



DEALING WITH GRIEF

Lean into grief

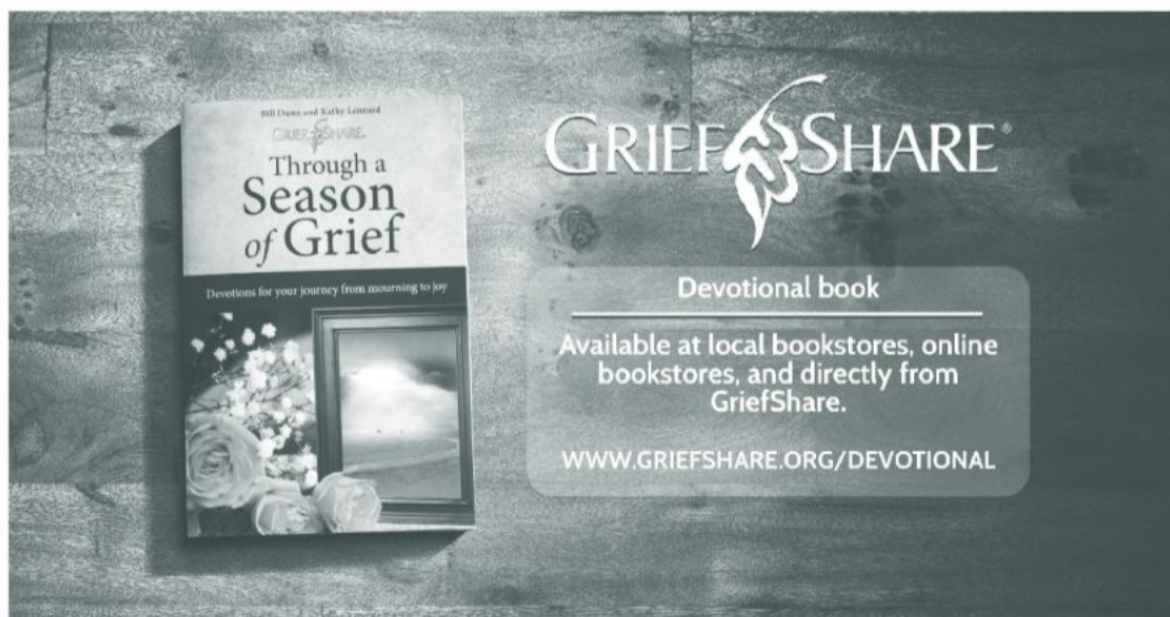
Postpone big decisions

Do the next thing

Commit to GriefShare (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

In this week's From Mourning to Joy exercises ...

Debi shares honestly about her deep pain after her daughter's death, her struggle to function, and her lack of desire to pray. Each day this week, you'll look at Bible passages addressing these struggles and others you might be facing.



"If I'm not sharing, then other people don't know I'm hurting." —Dr. Elias Moitinho

COMMON RESPONSES TO THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE

The responses below were shared by people who've faced a loved one's death.
Having an idea of what is normal in grief can be helpful.

You'll likely experience many emotions at once. Grief emotions are not orderly, but are more like a tangled ball. And some of the emotions listed here are polar opposites! Note that this list, while long, is not exhaustive. After looking over this list, if you're not sure if your grief experience is normal, talk with your GriefShare group leader. He or she will be able to help you.

Please understand that thinking you don't want to go on is normal, but thinking about suicide—especially making plans to take your life—is not normal. Seek help immediately.

- ☐ Abandoned
- ☐ Afraid of facing emotions
- ☐ Ambushed by grief
- ☐ Anger with others, self, loved one, and/or God
- ☐ Anguish
- ☐ Annoyance
- ☐ Anxiety
- ☐ Apathy
- ☐ Avoiding church
- ☐ Avoiding grief
- ☐ Avoiding thinking about the death
- ☐ Being harsh with others
- ☐ Betrayed
- ☐ Bitterness
- ☐ Blame
- ☐ Can't pray
- ☐ Can't talk about loved one
- ☐ Change of priorities
- ☐ Comparing your grief to other people's
- ☐ Compassion
- ☐ Complaining
- ☐ Concerned about your family members
- ☐ Confusion
- ☐ Consumed by grief
- ☐ Crisis of beliefs
- ☐ Crying
- ☐ Dazed
- ☐ Denial
- ☐ Depending on God
- ☐ Depression
- ☐ Desire for justice
- ☐ Despair
- ☐ Devastation
- ☐ Disappointment
- ☐ Disbelief
- ☐ Discontentment
- ☐ Discouragement
- ☐ Disorganized
- ☐ Disoriented
- ☐ Distracted
- ☐ Diving into work
- ☐ Don't want to go on
- ☐ Drained
- ☐ Drawing closer to God
- ☐ Dread
- ☐ Emotional wreck
- ☐ Emptiness
- ☐ Encouragement
- ☐ Envy
- ☐ Exhaustion/weakness
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Fear of future
- ☐ Feeling judged
- ☐ Feeling like everything is in slow motion
- ☐ Feeling like everything is too hard
- ☐ Feeling like God isn't there
- ☐ Feeling like mush
- ☐ Feeling like something's missing
- ☐ Feeling like you're doing something wrong
- ☐ Feeling like you're losing your mind

- ☐ Feeling like your faith isn't working
- ☐ Feeling like your grief is marginalized
- ☐ Feeling out of control
- ☐ Feeling part of you is gone, ripped away
- ☐ Feeling rushed
- ☐ Feeling you're being a burden
- ☐ Financial worries
- ☐ Flashbacks
- ☐ Forgetfulness
- ☐ Frustration
- ☐ Full of questions
- ☐ Going through the motions
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Hallucinations
- ☐ Happy your loved one is no longer suffering
- ☐ Heartbroken
- ☐ Heightened emotions
- ☐ Helping everyone but yourself
- ☐ Helplessness
- ☐ Hiding grief
- ☐ Hope
- ☐ Hopelessness
- ☐ Hurt
- ☐ Impatience
- ☐ In a dark tunnel
- ☐ Inability to do things as well as you used to
- ☐ Inability to function
- ☐ Inadequacy
- ☐ Increased appetite
- ☐ Insomnia
- ☐ Internalizing grief
- ☐ Intrusive thoughts
- ☐ Irritable
- ☐ Isolating self
- ☐ Jealousy
- ☐ Lack of concentration
- ☐ Lack of focus
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Loss of appetite
- ☐ Loss of identity
- ☐ Loss of purpose
- ☐ Making silly mistakes
- ☐ Memory loss
- ☐ Mental fog
- ☐ Missing loved one
- ☐ Nervous
- ☐ Nightmares
- ☐ No interest in doing things
- ☐ No sense of time
- ☐ Not allowing self to grieve
- ☐ Not enjoying what you used to enjoy
- ☐ Not trusting God
- ☐ Numbing pain
- ☐ Out of control
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Panic attacks
- ☐ Peace
- ☐ Physical problems: stomachache, headache, chest and heart hurting, nausea, hurting all over, migraines, shortness of breath
- ☐ Prayer
- ☐ Pretending you're okay
- ☐ Questioning your sanity
- ☐ Questions about heaven
- ☐ Rage
- ☐ Refusing joy
- ☐ Regret
- ☐ Rejection by friends
- ☐ Relief
- ☐ Roller coaster emotions
- ☐ Sadness
- ☐ Second-guessing
- ☐ Self-pity
- ☐ Shame
- ☐ Shock
- ☐ Shutting down
- ☐ Shutting people out
- ☐ Sleeping a lot
- ☐ Social and relational struggles
- ☐ Sorrow
- ☐ Squashed
- ☐ Staying busy
- ☐ Staying in bed
- ☐ Stress
- ☐ Stuffing down emotions
- ☐ Surprise
- ☐ Tangled emotions
- ☐ Thankfulness
- ☐ Tired
- ☐ Trying to take care of everything yourself
- ☐ Turning to God
- ☐ Unable to make decisions
- ☐ Uncomfortable with others
- ☐ Unproductive
- ☐ Unwilling to accept help
- ☐ Vindictiveness
- ☐ Vulnerable
- ☐ Wanting to rush through this
- ☐ Worry
- ☐ Other _____

FROM MOURNING TO JOY

ENCOURAGEMENT AND COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

Session One - Is This Normal?

Every session includes five short, daily exercises. Each day you'll read a Bible passage relevant to the emotions, struggles, and questions grieving people face. Then you'll learn how to apply it to your life and how it is relevant as you seek comfort and healing. At the end of each session is **My Weekly Grief Work**, a tremendous tool with practical steps you can take to aid in healing.



DEBI: "I DIDN'T WANT TO GO ON"

"When I lost my daughter, I didn't want to go on. Life was sucked out of me. I had prayed for healing for her, and this was the way God answered. I couldn't read my Bible. I didn't even pray really. I couldn't do simple things at home. Parents aren't supposed to bury their children. It's supposed to be the other way around. How can I continue to go on?"

Are you hurting? Exhausted? Overwhelmed? Like Debi, do you wonder how you can possibly go on? Maybe you feel that way, but you pretend you're okay. Be assured these are common responses to grief. This week's exercises will help you understand what's typical in grief and how turning to God will help, even when you wonder if God is really here.

DAY 1

I feel like I'm losing my mind

What you are experiencing is normal. It's all part of the grief process. You must go through it in order to heal. But you can make it through.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"I am worn out from sobbing. All night I flood my bed with weeping, drenching it with my tears. My vision is blurred by grief." (Psalm 6:6-7a NLT)

1. What does your grief look and feel like?

2. David, the writer of Psalm 6, describes how worn out he is in his grief. Describe your energy level and how it's affecting your daily life.

3. Why do you think attending GriefShare will be helpful?

CONSIDER THIS

"There are no shortcuts to grieving. We're going through the pain in order to heal, because pain does heal."

—Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge

"It's like a roller coaster ride. And I hate roller coasters." —Debi

TALKING TO GOD

God, the pain of my grief is pressing in, and sometimes I can't breathe with the force of it.
I'm so worn out. Lift me into Your arms.
Comfort me with Your presence,
and guide me on my journey.

DAY 2

God, where are You?

What you are experiencing is normal. It's all part of the grief process. You must go through it in order to heal. But you can make it through.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Why, LORD, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?" (Psalm 10:1)

1. Describe your recent feelings about God's presence.
2. If you feel like God is not here, does that mean it's true? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think God wants you to know that godly people of the past felt like He was far off (see Psalm 10:1)?

CONSIDER THIS

"When you're in the middle of grief you don't always sense His presence. So, now what? ..."

**Keep hurting.
Keep trusting.
Don't quit.**

"Say, 'This is where I am. I'm going to accept it. I hate it, but God is somehow at work. I don't feel it, but I'm going to live by faith.'"
—Dr. Larry Crabb

TALKING TO GOD

God, where are You? I need You desperately, but I don't feel like You're near. Despite my feelings, I'm going to keep turning to You because the Bible says You are an ever-present help in times of trouble.
You really are here, and You're working even in my darkness.

DAY 3

Finding stability

"How are you doing?" people ask. You force a smile and lie, "Oh, I'm doing alright."

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"O God, listen to my cry! Hear my prayer! From the ends of the earth, I cry to you for help when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the towering rock of safety." (Psalm 61:1–2 NLT)

1. At what times do you pretend you have things together?
2. David, a King of Israel, strong both physically and spiritually, is being authentic in his grief in Psalm 61. He's admitting his weaknesses, that he's overwhelmed. When are you most authentic in your grief?

"I remember trying to read my Bible, but there was this white noise in the background." —Carla



3. Why do you think being honest about your grief leads to more stable, secure footing than pretending you're doing okay?

CONSIDER THIS

Authenticity leads to stability.

"I can't understand God as my rock unless I'm willing to acknowledge that I'm feeling overwhelmed. To be able to talk to God and to other people in my life about it is an important step in processing [grief] with truth."

—Dr. Stephen Viars

TALKING TO GOD

God, sometimes it's easier to pretend things are fine, but really, they're not. I'm overwhelmed. I long to feel some security and stability in my life. Lead me to a new place in my relationship with You, a place where I know with certainty that You are my rock.

**DAY
4**

Does prayer really help?

"When I first walked into this storm of emotions, I walked in constant prayer. It helped me to get out of the storm and start to move forward; it helped me through the questions of why; it helped me through my issues with guilt and regrets." —Hollis

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray."
(James 5:13a)

1. Are you facing troubles right now? What does God say to do, according to James 5:13a?

2. How did prayer help Hollis (quoted at the beginning of today's exercise)?

3. Write a prayer to God telling Him what's troubling you today and asking for His help and strength.

We suggest you keep a journal, where you write your honest thoughts and prayers to God. See each session's My Weekly Grief Work for journaling ideas.

CONSIDER THIS

"We don't have to try to protect ourselves, but we can run to Him through prayer and find that He will protect and keep us."
—Elyse Fitzpatrick

TALKING TO GOD

God, You tell me in the Bible that if I'm in trouble, I need to pray. My mind is in a fog a lot of the time these days, but I sure am in trouble without You. Help me to pray.

**DAY
5**

It's okay to grieve

It's okay to grieve. Don't try to keep your tears in check. "If there were no love, there'd be no grief." —Zig Ziglar

GOD'S MESSAGE TO YOU

"Jesus wept." (John 11:35)

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27)

"Why God? Why?" —Debi



1. Maybe someone has said you should be over your grief by now, or that you're crying too much, or some other judgment. How did Jesus, who is God, who is perfect, grieve the death of His friend Lazarus (see John 11:35)?

2. If you are weeping and grieving because you love someone, you are reflecting God's image; in other words, you're responding the way God would. Write down any worries you've had that there's something wrong with the way you are grieving.

CONSIDER THIS

"It's a very Christlike thing to do, to weep, to grieve. That's exactly how Jesus felt, the Creator of the world, the One who knew He was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, yet Jesus wept."

—Dr. Stephen Viars

TALKING TO GOD

God, the relationship I had with my loved one was one-of-a-kind. When I worry that I'm not grieving the right way, help me understand that I don't need to be anyone but the person You created me to be.

DEBI: LOOKING BACK

"When I look back at when I wanted nothing to do with God, and then I look at my relationship with God now, I know Him in a totally different way. I don't know how life could get any harder than losing your daughter, but God walked with me through that whole time. He didn't let go. He's held me; He's carried me."

"It's not an easy path, but you can make it through. I've been through GriefShare three times, and every time I've gone through it, I've healed even more. It took His Word and a lot of His people surrounding me to help me heal. I'm still healing."

NEXT SESSION

Discover more symptoms of grief and how to start treating them.



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GRIEF SHARE

"God never walked away." —Debi

MY WEEKLY GRIEF WORK

Session - One



PERSONAL CHECKUP – TRACK YOUR HEALING PROGRESS

Place a check in the box identifying how you're feeling. Insert words to explain why.

	REALLY BAD	OKAY	PRETTY GOOD	GREAT
EMOTIONALLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PHYSICALLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SPIRITUALLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELATIONALLY	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

JOURNAL TOPICS – MAKING SENSE OF IT ALL

Choose one or more ideas below, or choose your own topic. We encourage you to use a separate notebook for your weekly journaling.

-  Pretend you're writing a letter to a friend to help him or her prepare for grief. What would you tell your friend to expect?
-  Share your fears for the future.

MOVING FORWARD – PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD HEALING

HOW TO AVOID MAKING A DECISION YOU'LL LATER REGRET

You saw in the video the importance of postponing big decisions.

Before making any major decisions, take the following steps:

1. What decision are you facing?
2. Can this decision wait? Why or why not?
3. List the pros and cons.
4. List people you can speak with about this decision, who will give you wise advice.
5. Write a prayer to God, asking for His direction.