
Anticipatory Grief: ACT for Parkinsons WTM May 16, 2024

Healing Anticipatory Grief Rabbi Rick Kline Thursday May 16, 2024, 7:00 to 8:30 PM

Grief is a natural human response to loss. **Anticipatory Grief** occurs before an imminent loss affecting people facing the impending death of a loved one or their own death. We will consider the various symptoms, types of losses, benefits, coping strategies and how to heal Anticipatory Grief with a special Healing Meditation.

Rabbi Rick Kline is a Certified Spiritual Health Practitioner currently at the Banff Mineral Springs Hospital supporting patients in Acute Care and seniors in Long Term Care. He also works at the University of Calgary, Cummings School of Medicine, as part of a multidisciplinary team developing and implementing a unique Palliative Care Program for patients with Parkinson's and related diseases. He was previously a member of the Palliative Care Team at the Foothills Hospital and wrote his master's thesis on "Preparing for End of Life, based on Jewish Sources including Hassidic Literature, Talmudic Sources and the book, Maavar Yabok." Rabbi Rick was a certified Yoga/Meditation Instructor and has practiced yoga and meditation for the past 27 years.

1. What is Grief?

- "Deep Sorrow, especially that which is caused by someone's death; the experience of deep loss especially of the one with whom a deep bond is formed." Oxford Dictionary.
- Grief is the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological reaction to loss, not just to death.
- Grief is a natural healthy reaction.
- Grief is a process, everyone is unique, there are no rules of how one will and should grieve.

"Grieving is a natural human response."

2. What is Anticipatory Grief?

- **Anticipatory Grief** is a state of deep, painful sorrow that occurs before an impending loss. It can affect people facing the impending death of a loved one or their own death.
- **Anticipatory Grief** is the grief you would expect to experience, much of which is **conceptual** and can change over time.
- Can be applied to other losses: anticipating losing a breast due to a mastectomy, facing impending divorce or being diagnosed with Parkinsons.
- Can be positive as it prepares you to cope by enabling planning and preparing for the loss.
- Can be negative as it can prolong grief with painful thoughts.
- May involve concerns about finances, how you are going to support your family afterwards, or feelings of guilt or fears of abandonment after the loss.
- **Conventional Grief**, your emotions and actions are reactive.
- **Anticipatory Grief**, your emotions and actions are largely proactive.
- Studies have shown that pre-loss stage can be more stressful than post-loss stage!

"We all experience a wide range of losses: deaths, divorces, job losses, illnesses,

relocation, loss of property, ecological loss, etc.”

3. What are the Symptoms of Anticipatory Grief?

- **Loss of control of your emotions:** intense sadness and tearfulness easily triggered.
- **Fear, irritability and anger:** dealing with your own fears, etc. and those of dying person.
- **Loneliness and isolation:** may find people backing away from you or you may feel lethargic, unmotivated and withdrawing from social situations.
- **Anxiety:** feeling heightened anxiety, manifesting trembling, edginess, a racing heart and other symptoms.
- **Guilt:** you want to relieve yourself of burden of caregiving, wanting loved-one to be pain free even if it means dying. Or you want loved-one to stay even if it means suffering.
- **Intense preoccupation with the dying person:** difficult to manage your own health, work or daily living.
- **Rehearsal of the death:** Visualizing what it will be like without your loved-one. If you are dying, how it will be for loved-ones to carry on without you.

“When a person faces grief, no matter what type, it hurts and it needs attention!”

4. What Other Kinds of Losses can we Grieve?

- Anticipatory grief is not just grief for the coming death of a loved one. It is also grief for the other losses that go along with death, such as:
 - The loss of a companion
 - The loss of shared memories
 - The loss of dreams for the future
- Sometimes, grief from the past may resurface during this time.
- Effects of Grief add up, however, they cannot be bottled up and locked away.
- Effects of Grief do not lessen with each loss.
- Denying the pain you feel now can prolong grief later on.
- Grief serves a purpose, whether it occurs before death or after death.

“We all experience a wide range of losses: deaths, divorces, job losses, illnesses, relocation, loss of property, ecological loss, etc.”

5. What is the Mind, Body, Spirit Connection?

Each loss can be experienced as a **“Mini-Trauma”** with an accumulated effect.

- Trauma does not have to be a severe accident or a major shock to the system.
- Trauma defined: “A deeply distressing or disturbing experience.”
- Trauma occurs when boundaries are breached, the body feels a shock, even if no memory of it.
- Traumas reside in the body. When we are frightened, our nervous system reacts. This used to be a protective response. Animals know instinctively how to remove the shock from their system.

“If shock is not removed from the system, then it can manifest as anxiety, emotional stress, reduced energy or even pathology/illness.”

6. What are the Benefits of Anticipatory Grief?

Depends on individual. For some it helps to sort out feelings and make preparations to move forward. It can lessen distress and help you to better able to navigate bereavement when your loved-one dies.

- Confront your fears rather than avoid them.
- Deal with any unfinished business, both practical and emotional.
- Clarify misunderstandings, say what needs to be said.
- Say your goodbyes.
- Make preparations for moving forward with your life.

For some, anticipatory grief is only a prelude to conventional grief, neither assisting you for harsh reality of your loss or preparing you for life ahead. Some can only mourn after death.

“Loss and Grief – A Core Curriculum in Life”

7. How to Cope with Anticipatory Grief?

Important to let yourself grieve. Find a friend or another loved one to help you.

- Share your feelings openly with your loved-one and/or with somebody you trust.
- Let yourself grieve, feel the pain in your heart, it is only natural.
- Be honest and true to yourself.
- Joining a support group can provide insight.
- Allow feelings of grief to help you prepare and deal with unresolved issues.
- Say what needs to be said to your loved-one.
- Educate yourself about what to expect: know symptoms, side effects and prognosis.
- Get assistance caring for your loved-one and continue to live your life: self-care is essential.
- Create moments of enjoyment for your loved-one. In end, these moments might be what you will cherish.
- Maintain hope
- Prepare for death.

“We can deny its existence, but Grief is patient and waits,

as long as we have the energy to ignore it.”

8. What is the Healing Process?

- **Recognize and Acknowledge the Loss:**
 - Understanding we are all affected by the deaths of people we care for.
- **Recollect and re-experience the deceased and the relationship:**
 - Need to talk and express feelings to someone who can really listen.
 - Professional Assistance, Trauma Therapy: Somatic Experiencing, Focusing.
- **Release old attachments to the deceased:**
 - To extent we hold attachments, we need to be able to let go.
- **Readjust to a new state of being without forgetting the old:**
 - The story we tell needs to be changed to allow growth and transformation.

“Grief is a ‘Journey Through,’ not Around.”

9. What is the Grieving Process?

Process:

- 1. Acknowledge,**
- 2. Tell Your Story,**
- 3. Release and**
- 4. Find new Meaning.**

- Recognize that providing several ways in which to grieve opens the way for the process to unfold.
- Be encouraged to find different ways to express your grief:
 - Drawing
 - Talking
 - Music
 - Imagining
 - Healing Meditation

“Grief: The Way Out is Through.”

10. Healing Meditation:

- This is where the **‘Spirit’ meets body and mind.**