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# TRINITY COUNSELING TIPS AND TIDBITS

*Helpful hints and ideas for personal growth.*

SOME TIPS AND  
TRICKS FOR YOUR  
TIME OF SOCIAL  
DISTANCING

VOL.4



## GRIEVING LOSS

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People often say, **"You never really know what you have until it's gone"**. Many of us have recently discovered this undeniable truth about loss. Some losses seem so small and trivial in the midst of a crisis, we are hesitant to even voice them, such as getting a haircut, eating out with friends, sitting in a classroom, or playing sports. We may long to visit a grandparent, hug a friend, go to church again, or simply get back to our daily routine. Other losses loom large enough to preoccupy our thoughts all day long because we have lost our income, our childcare, our healthcare, or our housing.



Some of us grieve the loss of a significant relationship or an important rite of passage, a graduation, a wedding, or a funeral. Our hearts break for those among us who have lost a loved one and are unable to receive the physical touch and connection they need to help them heal.

Grieving a loss of any kind can trigger a range of difficult emotional reactions, including anxiety, denial, anger, frustration, sadness, and hopelessness. Loss may also trigger positive feelings, such as relief from an over-scheduled pace of life, inner peace in the solitude, strength from a renewed relationship with God, or gratitude for simple pleasures like afternoon naps, long walks in nature, or time at home with family. Regardless of our individual experiences, we each benefit by gaining wisdom from each loss because grieving reminds us what we value most in our lives. Although some losses are temporary while others are permanent, our lives will never be exactly the same after this crisis is over. It is up to each one of us to decide how we will process our grief and how this time of loss will change us going forward.

Many books and theories have been written about the process of grieving loss. One helpful approach, developed by Dr. J. William Worden, describes four tasks of mourning that people need to work through to help them process grief. His approach invites those who are grieving loss to take an active role in helping themselves and others move through grief to a place where they feel a sense of peace and equilibrium has been reestablished. Each person will move through these four tasks at their own pace depending on their situation and the depth and type of loss they are grieving.



# 4 TASKS OF GRIEF

DR. J. WILLIAM WORDEN

## TASK #1 – ACCEPT THE REALITY AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOSS

As one tries to accept a loss in their life, they often acknowledge what has changed, but neglect to reflect on how and why the loss is so important to them. It is normal and healthy to protect ourselves initially from the shock of a loss by denying it is real or minimizing its significance in our lives. One may flip back and forth between belief and disbelief, but eventually begin talking in the past tense about the loss and working through appropriate rituals of letting go. Accepting the reality of a loss takes time and involves not only intellectual acceptance in our mind, but it also requires emotional and spiritual acceptance of the loss as well.

## TASK #2 – PROCESS THE PAIN OF THE LOSS

It is very important to express the feelings associated with loss otherwise the pain can manifest itself in other ways through physical symptoms or misdirected behavior. Some people prefer to tell their story verbally and talk about their losses, others prefer to pray, meditate, journal, or create artwork that expresses the pain of their losses. It is necessary to be patient with this process, trying not to deny or avoid feelings. It is helpful to find a safe person or a safe space where one can acknowledge, understand, and allow feelings to flow freely. If this task is accomplished well, one is less likely to carry the pain of loss with them as they move through their lives.

## TASK #3 – ADJUST TO A WORLD WITHOUT WHAT WAS LOST

Adjusting to a different environment that is void of what was lost will differ for each person depending on their situation and the value of what was lost in one's life. Worden suggests this task requires internal, external, and spiritual adjustments over an extended period of time. Loss can affect one's sense of identity and self-esteem, lead one to re-evaluate goals and relationships with others, or question one's purpose in the world. Readjustment may require learning new skills, taking on different roles, responsibilities, and living situations, or building new support systems. As a person slowly accomplishes one small change at a time, they begin to feel more resilient and gradually regain a sense of control over their daily life.

## TASK #4 - DISCOVER AN ENDURING CONNECTION TO WHAT WAS LOST WHILE ALSO MOVING FORWARD

For many people this is the most difficult task to accomplish because it is common to get stuck holding on to the past and wanting things to be the way they were before the losses occurred. Moving forward can be hindered when one holds on to past attachments in such a way that it prevents them from forming attachments to new beginnings. The goal is to find a way to hold on to thoughts and memories of the way things used to be, while beginning to find meaningful engagement in new events, relationships, roles, and goals for the future. Some people create a special ritual, a memento, or a legacy to commemorate what was lost, while allowing them freedom to move forward. This task takes time and requires prayer, support, and encouragement from others.

# SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

## *Processing Questions to take with you*

As we process grief, we can reflect on both the difficult and positive feelings experienced as a result of any loss in our lives. We can look for ways to help ourselves and others work through these mourning tasks gradually, so that we can process grief in a healthy way keeping our eyes focused on seeking God's plan for our lives.

We can also gain wisdom in asking ourselves these questions regarding any loss we may be facing:

- What does each loss say about what I value most in my life?
- How can I live differently after this crisis to prioritize who and what I value most?
- What have I learned about God, others, and myself through this experience of loss that I would like to act on going forward?