

# SHARE THE WELLNESS TIP



January 9, 2015

## When Grief Won't Go Away

TEAR Model of Grief

### the tasks of grief

**T** = To accept the reality of the loss

**E** = Experience the pain of the loss

**A** = Adjust to the new environment without the lost person

**R** = Reinvest in the new reality

Based upon Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's 1969 book, "On Death and Dying"

Revised by the American Cancer Society, 2014

© 2014 American Cancer Society. All rights reserved.

www.aacr.org

Grieving the loss of a loved one is a deep and difficult challenge at any time. Family gatherings and seasonal events can be painful reminders of the absence of a loved one. At the same time, they can also be comforting rituals where you spend time with family and friends, focusing on good memories and trying to recapture a sense of joy. Grieving over the loss of a loved one is natural, but about 15 percent of people who lose someone can't move on with life because of severe or complicated grief. For most people, grief and the pain of their loss eventually fade into the background. However, people who suffer from complicated grief find themselves unable to move on. Their grief dominates their lives.

In this sort of grief, different factors interfere with the normal healing process. These factors vary, but they could relate to the nature of the relationship the person had with the deceased, the mental health of the grieving person, circumstances surrounding the person's death, and even events that took place after the person passed away.

A complicated reaction is more likely after a death that was sudden, violent, unexpected, or premature. Bereaved people are also prone to problems if they're unable to shake thoughts about how they or someone else could have prevented the death.

Even if the person died without trauma, some people with a history of depression, anxiety, personality disorders, or trouble dealing with loss are more likely to have a complicated response.

### Recognizing Complicated Grief

People dealing with complicated grief often feel cut off from family and friends. They can find it hard to function.

They could be suffering from the condition if they have more than three of the following symptoms for more than six months after a loved one's death:

- Strong longing for the person who died
- Feeling intensely lonely even when they're with other people
- Strong anger related to the death
- Feeling life is empty or meaningless without the person
- Disruption of relationships with other people because they're thinking so much about the deceased
- Finding it hard to accept the death
- Feeling shocked, stunned, or emotionally numb
- Having difficulty caring about or trusting other people
- A strong physical or emotional reaction to reminders of the loss
- Avoiding people, places, or things that remind them of the loss
- Having strong urges to see, touch, hear, or smell things that remind them of the deceased

If you or someone you know could be dealing with complicated grief, talk to your doctor. Learning about complicated grief (also known as unresolved or traumatic grief) may help you seek treatment for yourself or a loved one.

Sources: The American Cancer Society, AARP.org