

GOING FURTHER

VALLEYDALE SUPPORT

Life Groups

Valleydale offers a variety of Adult Life Groups that offer support. For more information go to www.valleydale.org/lifegroups and click on the “Find a Life Group” link or stop by the Next Steps Desk in the lobby to learn which group might be a fit for you.

Grief Share

For people grieving the loss of a family member or friend. A 13-week support group that helps to heal from a loss. For more information about when Grief Share is offered, call 205.991.5282.

Divorce Care

A 13-week support group for people who have experienced a divorce. Provides support to help with the emotions of divorce as well as providing practical next steps for positive decision making.

Counseling

Valleydale provides onsite, Christ-centered professional counseling. Both male and female counselors are available. Counseling is offered for adults, teens and children. All counseling is confidential. For more information, visit www.valleydale.org/counseling or call 205.991.5282.

Stephen Ministry

This ministry is intended to match you with someone who has a similar life experience but is a little further along for the purpose of perspective, understanding and hope. You will be matched with a carefully selected church member who is supervised by the church and works in strict confidence. To learn more about this ministry, contact the ministry coordinator for a confidential conversation at 205.991.5282.

For more
resources, visit
valleydale.org/family
OR
visit our resource
center in the
lobby

GRIEVING

Death, Divorce, Separation, Change



UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

Nothing hurts like losing someone you love due to death, divorce, or separation. Similar feelings often surface after a major life change such as job loss or a move. The ache inside can feel as if your soul will crush under the weight of a deep, paralyzing sorrow. You may find yourself asking how a loving God could allow such a painful thing to happen. The dull sadness often bleeds into denial or anger. Grief is unpredictable, affecting each of us in slightly different ways.

While it may not ease the pain, understanding that grief is normal can help us cope a little better when we lose a special person or go through a significant change.

How Grief Feels

If you feel like you are losing your grip on reality, you might be a perfectly sane person enduring the confusion of grief. Perhaps you suffer irrational fear, dread or even paranoia. You may feel empty or numb like you are in shock. Grief even causes some people to experience trembling, nausea, breathing difficulty, muscle weakness, loss of appetite or insomnia. Feelings of anger can also surface, even if there is nothing in particular to be angry about. Almost everyone tortures themselves with guilt by asking what they did wrong, how they might have prevented the loss, or some other form of self-condemnation. In short, grief makes us feel like our emotions have gone haywire because, in many ways, they have. Over time, however, you will regain a measure of equilibrium.

Why Grief Hurts

God gave us the gift of pain so that we can react when something goes wrong. We limp when a leg bone is out of joint to protect us from further damage. In similar manner, losing an important person or going through a significant change can cause our entire system to react as it recognizes that something is wrong. You might say that the confusing emotions and ache in the pit of your soul are part of grief's "limp." The more intimate the loss, the more severe your "limp" will be. The severity and length of your pain is a testimony to the value of the person lost or the importance of the situation that changed.

What Grief Means

God made us for intimacy and life – not separation and death. When we grieve, our deepest selves declare that something is wrong with this broken

world. Death, divorce and separation were not part of God's original plan for humanity. The Bible tells us these things came into our experience as a result of disobedience when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. *"For when you eat of it you will surely die"* (Genesis 2:17). Ever since the day mankind left the perfection of paradise we have known something is wrong. Our bodies and emotions react against what should not be.

How Grief Heals

Even though it may not feel like it, grief can be a source of great hope. Your reaction against what is wrong comes from a deep yearning for things to be made right. Loss can open us to ultimate wholeness and restoration. While grieving the death of his wife, C.S. Lewis asked, "What do people mean when they say, 'I am not afraid of God because I know He is good?' Have they never been to a dentist?" The dentist's drill, while an instrument of intense pain, ultimately brings health. The drill of grief fosters healing in our lives by raising ultimate issues and eternal questions such as "Who is my true beloved?" and "Where is my real home?" As believers, we know that a much better day is coming when God himself will wipe every tear from our eyes. On that day *"There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away"* (Revelation 21:3-4).

Children and Grief

If you have children impacted by the pain of a death, divorce, separation or change, it is important that you remain attentive to their needs. You are God's gift to them as they endure a loss that may be beyond comprehension. It is not your role to explain why it has happened. It is your role to be an agent of comfort and grace, allowing them to experience the confusing emotions of grief in the safety of your patient company.

GOING FURTHER RESOURCES

When God Doesn't Make Sense by Dr. James Dobson

Someone I Love Died by Christine Harder Tangvald

When Bad Things Happen: A Guide to Help Kids Cope

by Ted O'Neal and R.W. Alley

Praying Through Cancer by Susan Sorenson and Laura Geist

Let Me Grieve, But Not Forever by Verdel Davis