

# Healing Through Grieving



## Office of Lycoming County Coroner

48 West Third Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Office: (570) 327-2305  
Fax: (570) 329-4774

## Lycoming County Communications Center

*24 Hour Access*

(570) 433-4360 or (800) 555-7811 (PA only)

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### *A Message From the Coroner:*

As the Lycoming County Coroner, I would like to express my sincere sympathy during your loss. My office is always available to assist you and your family during the difficult times ahead.

*(Matthew 5:4: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.)*

This booklet was developed to assist you through the grieving process and to provide you with community resources available should you need assistance. Please feel free to contact my office or any of the agencies listed, should you feel the need for support or guidance.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Kiessling, Jr., RN, BSN, CEN  
Lycoming County Coroner

# GRIEF

MORE THAN  
JUST A  
FIVE LETTER  
WORD

Written by  
Paul T. Clements, PhD, RN, CS  
Gloria C. Henry



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[www.forensicnurse.org](http://www.forensicnurse.org)

**Bereaved Parents Support Group**  
St. Joseph the Worker Church  
711 W. Edwin St., 1st Fl. Classroom  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
3rd Tues, 7pm  
(570) 323-9456

**Heartworks**  
Children's Bereavement Specialists  
Divine Providence Hospital  
1100 Grampian Blvd, Suite 383  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 320-7691

#### **Narcotics/Alcoholics Anonymous**

**Christ Episcopal Church**  
426 Mulberry St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 322-8160  
NA-Thurs, 7pm

**New Covenant United Church  
Of Christ**  
202 E. 3rd St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 326-3308  
Upper Room (entrance is on side of  
Academy St.)  
NA-Mon, Tues & Fri, 1pm  
AA-Wed & Thurs, 1:15pm

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
(866) 671-6130  
[www.district48aa.org](http://www.district48aa.org)

**Narcotics Anonymous**  
(570) 327-2678

**Diamond St. Christian Church**  
822 Diamond St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 326-0731  
NA (Family)-Mon, 7pm  
Co-Dependency-Sun, 4pm  
NA-Thurs, 7pm

**Newberry Church of Christ**  
2101 Linn St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 326-0731  
AA-Tues, 6pm

**Greenview Alliance Church**  
1955 Warrensville Rd  
Montoursville, PA 17754  
800-327-5513 or (570) 433-4506  
Nar-Anon for Relatives/Friends of  
Addicts  
Wed, 7pm

**Ala-Non/AlaTeen**  
Williamsport Hospital  
700 High St  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(800) 344-2666  
Conf.Rm. 1B, Sun, 7pm

#### **Other Resources**

**Suicide Hotline**  
National: 1-800-784-2433  
Lycoming County: (570) 326-7895

**West Branch Drug & Alcohol**  
(888) 941-2721

**Crossroads Counseling**  
(570)323-7535

**White Deer Treatment Center**  
(855)231-1198

[www.opentohope.com](http://www.opentohope.com)  
[www.allianceofhope.org](http://www.allianceofhope.org)  
[www.cjsids.org](http://www.cjsids.org)  
[www.lifeworthliving.org](http://www.lifeworthliving.org)  
[www.celtichealthcare.com](http://www.celtichealthcare.com) or call  
Donna Miller (877) 788-3060

Jeremiah 31:13  
I will turn their mourning into  
gladness; I will give them comfort  
and joy instead of sorrow.

## Support Groups

The following is a list of support groups and resources in our community. It is provided by the Lycoming County Coroner's Office (570) 327-2305. In a crisis situation, when logic and reasoning are diminutive, we encourage parents and their families to contact a local support group.

### Behavioral Health Center

Divine Providence Hospital  
Individual & Group Bereavement  
1100 Grampian Blvd.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 320-7525  
On-call 24-hours, Walk-ins welcome

### Bereavement Support Group

1100 Grampian Blvd.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 320-7690 or 1-800-848-2213

### Diakon Family Life Institute

Family, Individual, Marital & Suicide  
Counseling  
435 W. 4th St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 322-7873  
Mon-Thurs, 8am-8pm, Fri, 8am-4pm  
By appointment only

### Crisis Intervention Emergency Services for Lycoming Children & Youth

200 East St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 325-7895, 24-hours

### Catholic Social Services

1201 Grampian Blvd.  
Suite 2G  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 322-4220

### Cornerstone Family Health

Outpatient Psychotherapy &  
Counseling  
1205 Grampian Blvd.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 326-4118

### Compassionate Friends

Zion Lutheran Church  
Fifth & Market Streets  
Sunbury, PA 17801  
(570) 524-2927

### Empty Arms Support Group

Evangelical Hospital  
Community Health Center  
210 JPM Rd.  
Lewisburg, PA 17837  
(570) 768-3200

### Bereavement Support Group

Muncy Valley Hospital  
Skilled Nursing Unit  
215 E. Water St.  
Muncy, PA 17756  
(570) 546-8282

### Bereavement Support Group

Hospitality Lounge  
Susquehanna Health  
802 Campbell St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 321-3280

### SIDS Support Group

First United Methodist Church  
Mill Hall, PA 17754  
(570) 726-4421

### Survivors of Suicide

JV Brown Library  
19 E. 4th St.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
3rd Thurs of each month, 6-7:30pm  
(570) 753-3821

### Heartworks Children's Grief Support Group

Divine Providence Hospital  
1100 Grampian Blvd.  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
(570) 320-7691

### General Grief Support Group

61 Duke St.  
Northumberland, PA 17857  
Jim Taylor 1-800-634-5232

# G-R-I-E-F

Grief is a complicated little word. Grief can occur as a result of loss stemming from affliction, violence, accidents, sudden change, and death. The grieving process is just as complicated as this five letter word is simple.

Grief can resemble an emotional wave that can be very disruptive to daily life. When a loss occurs, it is typically a total shock, even if the loss was expected. It is at this point that the grieving process begins.

## In the beginning... Shock and numbness

Shock and numbness are a very normal initial reaction. During this time, talk about the loss. This can help validate that the loss has occurred and can facilitate reinvesting in life. The assistance of family and friends can be additionally helpful. However, family and friends will eventually need to return to their own lives. Suddenly it may feel as though you are all alone and facing the reality of the loss. This is when grieving and mourning really begin and can be a roller coaster ride of emotions. It is now that you will find yourself confronted with your grief. It is possible for grief to affect us mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

## The path of grief...

The only way to get through your grief  
is to go all the way in and the only  
way to get past your grief is to go all  
the way through it.

# G

## Goals for healing

- Set realistic goals for yourself.
- Start with small short ones.
- Accept the fact that what you are feeling is real and may be painful.
- Remember that the pain of loss might manifest itself in many different ways.
- Know that you must mourn the loss, so allow yourself to do just that.
- Go with your feelings and do not attempt to minimize the fact that the pain of loss exists.
- Cry if and when you feel like it.
- Do not allow yourself to go into a state of loneliness; do not avoid those who care about you.

- Do not allow guilt or fear to set you back. We often feel that we could have or should have done something to prevent what happened and may begin to worry about future losses.
- Experience your thoughts and feelings one day at a time.

## R Responses to grieving

- Each person grieves differently and at his/her own speed. It is important not to try to rush through your grief.
- Don't be too hard on yourself by thinking you should be feeling well and be "over it" in a month or two.
- Grief-related symptoms are typical for at least the first year, and may be considered normal for up to two years. (However, extreme grief-related symptoms may require medical or mental health intervention.)
- Do not allow others to define the loss for you. Decide for yourself what the loss means to you.
- Allow yourself to "backslide." Just because you felt great yesterday does not mean that you may feel the same today, tomorrow, or next week. Grief is a process with peaks and valleys along the way.
- It's OK to feel angry, betrayed, fearful, tired, confused or ill; these symptoms can be normal grief responses. However, if they persist, do contact your health-care provider.
- Don't be surprised if you find yourself repeating the story of your loss over and over again. This helps to make the loss real and helps you to explore what the loss really means to you.
- Although you may not feel like it, eat nutritiously, exercise, and get adequate rest.

## I Intervention for healthy grieving

- If you feel that you need help and are worried about your well-being or safety, contact a grief counselor or other health care provider who will help validate your feelings and strategize for appropriate help.
- Join a support group. This can provide an opportunity for you to speak with others who can relate to what you are going through.
- Accept the help of family and friends. Remember, they may be unsure of how to help. Share with them what you need.
- Do not allow others to talk you into making any major decisions.

in children and teens who are already depressed or anxious

- Remember that young children who are depressed typically have different symptoms (e.g., restlessness, excessive motor activity) than older school-age children or teens who are depressed (e.g., sad or withdrawn affect; difficulty sleeping or eating; talking about feeling hopeless).
- Anger can be a sign of anxiety in children and teens.
- Children, even teens, who are stressed typically regress (e.g., revert to doing things that they did when they were younger, such as sucking their thumbs, bedwetting, or acting dependent upon their parents). This is a healthy temporary coping strategy. However, if these symptoms persist for several weeks, talk to your healthcare provider about them.

9. Use this opportunity as a time to work with children on their coping skills.
10. Be sure to have your child or teen seen by a healthcare provider or mental health professional for signs or symptoms of depression, persistent anxiety, recurrent pain, persistent behavioral changes, or if they have difficulty maintaining their routine schedules.
11. Remember that this can be an opportunity to build future coping and life skills as well as bring your family unit closer together.

Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, RN, CPNP  
 Chair, KySS Campaign  
 Bernadette\_Melnyk@urmc.rochester.edu

This handout, part of the KySS (Keep your children/yourself Safe and Secure) Campaign, may be reproduced for use with and dissemination to families with children and teens. The KySS campaign, founded by the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNAP) and endorsed/supported by 15 other national nursing and interdisciplinary organizations, is a national effort to prevent and reduce psychosocial morbidities in children and teens. For more information about the KySS campaign, please contact the national office of NAPNAP at 1-877-662-7627 or Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk.tragedytips

## HELPING CHILDREN, TEENS, AND THEIR FAMILIES COPE WITH TRAGEDY

1. Be honest and give age and developmentally appropriate explanations about the traumatic event.
  - For young children, in particular, only provide answers to questions they are asking and do not overwhelm them with too much detail. Use language that young children can understand. Do not expose young children to visual images that are terrifying in the newspapers or television.
  - It may be easier for young children to express how they are feeling by asking them to talk about how their stuffed animals or dolls are feeling or thinking.
2. Help children and teens to express how they are feeling about what they have seen or heard. If children have difficulty verbally expressing their feelings, ask them to make a drawing about how they are feeling. Older school-age children and teens can benefit from writing about how they feel.
  - Ask children and teens, "What is the scariest or worst thing about this event for you?"
3. Reassure children that they did nothing wrong to cause what happened.
  - Toddlers and preschool children especially feel guilty when something tragic happens.
4. Tell children and teens that what they are feeling (e.g., anger, anxiety, helplessness) is normal and that others feel the same way.
5. Alleviate some of their anxiety by reassuring children that we will get through this together and will be stronger as a result of what we have been through. Emphasize that everything is now under control and that adults will be there to help them through this and that they are not alone.
6. Help children and teens to release their tension by encouraging daily physical exercise and activities.
7. Continue to provide structure to children's schedules and days.
8. Recognize that a tragic event could elevate psychological or physical symptoms (e.g., headaches, abdominal pain or chest pain

## E

### Effectiveness

Short-term goals:

- You can talk about the loss without feeling overwhelmed or bursting into tears.
- Your energy level is improved and you feel like participating in various activities.
- Sleep and dietary patterns begin to normalize.
- Your life feels more organized.
- Decision-making is easier.
- It is easier to be around people.

Long-term goals:

- The inner pain begins to decrease.
- You can now talk about the loss.
- Your sense of humor returns.
- Decision-making now occurs without feeling the need to second-guess yourself.
- Sleep and dietary patterns return to normal.
- Relationships with others are renewed or rebuilt.

## F

### Final thoughts

- When looking at the long-term goals, if they apply to you, then you have completed the grieving process. However, there are still going to be times when you may feel the pain of your loss. This only means that instead of days, weeks or months, the periods of pain will be fleeting moments.
- Don't be alarmed or surprised to find yourself saddened during the holidays, special occasions, or as you near the anniversary date of your loss. These are typical times for thoughts to be drawn to the loss.
- As healing progresses, the sadness will decrease (but may never completely go away).
- One final rule of thumb: The goal of good grief is not to try to forget the loss, but to put the loss into perspective in your own particular life history and reinvest or find whatever in life you enjoy.

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Gloria C. Henry is a bereavement specialist in Philadelphia and provides counseling and consultation to families and the community, particularly those experiencing sudden and traumatic deaths