

GRIEF & RESILIENCY

Grieving plays an important role in the mental health healing-recovery process. The Bible recognizes that both sorrow and joy can exist together.

“Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.”

— 2 Corinthians 6:10¹

JESUS' ILLUSTRATION: *“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy” (John 16:20-22).*

PSYCHOLOGY SAYING: *“What we resist persists, but what we can feel we can heal.”*

RESEARCH SUGGESTS: Prolonged grief can lead to clinical depression. Though grief and depression are different, 50%–70% of people with severe grief also develop major depressive disorder (MDD), experiencing persistent hopelessness, impaired functioning, and self-blame.²

SITUATIONAL DEPRESSION VS CLINICAL DEPRESSION (MDD): Situational depression is a response to specific stressors and usually resolves with time. Clinical depression lasts over two weeks, may have no clear cause, disrupts daily function, and needs professional care. The key differences are cause, severity, and duration.

GRIEF THERAPY: Therapeutic grief support offers a safe space to address emotions, reduces isolation, promotes healthy coping, and helps prevent lasting mental health complications.

WHAT ABOUT CRYING? Crying eases grief, releases stress-relieving hormones, increases calming oxytocin, and indicates a need for support.³

“You ... put my tears into Your bottle”

— King David (Psalm 56:8)

New King James Version

***“Blessed are those who mourn [grieve or lament],
for they will be comforted.”***

— Jesus (Matthew 5:4)

“Jesus wept.” ... “In the days of Jesus’ flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death ... was heard because of His godly fear.”

— John 7:35; Hebrews 5:8

WHAT IS LAMENT? In the Bible, a lament is an honest prayer to God expressing sorrow or regret, acknowledging His authority and seeking help. Prominent in Psalms and Lamentations, laments go beyond complaints to show faith in God's deliverance.

About 30% to 70% of the 150 Psalms are laments, highlighting human suffering and hope through requests for help and expressions of distress.

QUOTE: *“Lament is resolved by and corresponds to the song of thanksgiving. Indeed, the song of thanksgiving is the lament restated after the crisis has been dealt with.”*
— Walter Brueggemann (a student of Biblical lament)⁴

IN OTHER WORDS: Thanksgiving (giving thanks) shows gratitude after hardships, but Scripture also encourages giving thanks in advance, which can promote positive results. (See Psalm 100; Romans 8:28; 1 Thessalonians 5:18)

REFLECTIVE PAUSE PROJECTS

TIMEOUT

Overcoming Survivors: Anxiety, depression, and other mental health difficulties and disorders are physical conditions, not our identities.

No one ever says, “I am cancer,” they say, “I have cancer.” No matter what mental health difficulty or disorder we may be facing, we can confidently say, “I am not _____ [depression, anxiety, bipolar, etc.]. It’s only my condition, not who I am. I am fully and unconditionally loved by God, forever His child.”

Describe why this idea can be so challenging for us to believe.

Support Partners: Grief is the reaction to a significant personal loss. The aftermath of a loss impacts how we perceive ourselves and our overall safety and security. We can define loss as the loss of a loved one, employment, a home, personal dreams, or something private and personal to our lives. God designed us to grieve these losses. It is His way of allowing our emotions to heal and regain our strength and purpose in life.

How have you experienced grief in relation to your loved one’s mental health difficulty or disorder?

TIMEOUT

Overcoming Survivors: Some of our symptoms may cause us to pull away from other people. However, as believers in Christ, we are not alone. We are His children and part of a greater family, which the Bible refers to as the Body of Christ. This community of faith exists both inside and outside of the Church.

Describe your experience being part of a community or a group while dealing with symptoms of your mental health difficulty. Why do you think attending a support group is (or could be) helpful?

Support Partners: Grieving can be challenging. Because of this, it is a great opportunity for us to lean upon our supportive communities (e.g., family, friends, church community), allowing them to provide comfort, encouragement, and practical help.

When helping someone in the grieving process, what are comforting things that you can say and do? What are things not to say or do?

TIMEOUT

Overcoming Survivors: Our mental health difficulties and disorders do not limit our relationship with Jesus. Although feeling disconnected from God can be normal and frustrating, it is not a result of our failure or a reflection of God not being present with us. Christ is in each of us, and His presence is with us in all circumstances, both good and bad. He wants us to share our feelings, our thankfulness, and our requests. The Bible says, “He longs to be gracious to you” (Isaiah 30:18).

Without feeling the need to “do more” or work for God, describe practical ways you’re able to remember that God is with you and for you.

Support Partners: The grieving process can feel like being on a roller coaster. The key is to be aware of how we're managing our overall health and lifestyle (e.g., sleep, eating, exercise, energy, etc.). If our health is diminishing and we are experiencing ongoing feelings of depression, it is common to seek professional therapy for support or take medication. We do not need to be afraid or ashamed to receive professional care.

Describe how the grieving process tends to impact your overall health and lifestyle (e.g., sleep, eating, exercise, energy).

TIMEOUT

Overcoming Survivors: Grieving is not a linear, step-by-step experience. It is a process that looks different for each person. There is no time limit, and some may take longer to work through the grieving process than others. Understanding this process helps to validate our experience and move us toward comfort and hope.

What does grief as a process mean to you?

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REDEFINED IDENTITY STATEMENTS

Circumstances and struggles do not define who we are; you and God do.

Mental health challenges often lead to negative self-labeling. Understanding our identity in Christ can help us embrace our unique qualities, gifts, and talents.

- Choose three Redefined Identity Statements on page five that impact you the most and write them out in the “I AM” spaces provided and/or in your reflection journal.
- Next, describe when it would be beneficial to remind yourself of these truths throughout the week (e.g., “when I am feeling lonely and isolated,” “when I’m feeling overwhelmed by my symptoms”).

REDEFINED IDENTITY STATEMENTS

I am a son or daughter of a loving God. (Romans 8:15)

I am made completely new and am not defined by my old self. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am chosen and loved more than I can imagine by God. (Colossians 3:12)

I am freed and forgiven by God’s never-ending grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

I am not alone; Christ is always present with me. (Colossians 1:27)

I am never separated from God because I have direct access to Him through prayer. (Ephesians 2:18)

I am a valued member of God’s community. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I am called a “friend” by Jesus. (John 15:15)

I am made complete in Christ. (Colossians 2:10)

I AM:

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I AM

RESILIENT GRIEVING

Grief models are frameworks — not rule books. Grief isn't linear; you might revisit stages or skip them entirely.

It might be worth your time to review the Kübler-Ross model, or *Five Stages of Grief*, which was introduced by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in 1969's On Death and Dying. Later it was modified to a seven-stage model.⁵

However, my emphasis here is on a Four Stage Resilient Grieving Model.

SHOCK: Cushion & Denial

Experience: Numbness, disbelief, avoidance, or suppression. Seeking a quick fix is common.

Purpose: Shock helps soften the initial impact of loss, giving emotional protection as we process pain.

PAIN: Detachment, Anger, & Sadness

Experience: Dwelling on hurt, isolating, or reacting with anger.

Purpose: Acknowledging pain validates our hardship and supports detachment, paving the way for growth.

JUDGMENT & BARGAINING: Control, Guilt, & Shame

Experience: Blaming, feeling guilt, or bargaining for change.

Purpose: This stage helps us work through confusion and self-criticism, leading to comfort and hope.

RESILIENCE: Acceptance & Resolve

Experience: It's not denial. It's moving forward with realistic acknowledgment. Relapses into grief are normal and, rightly framed, help us learn.

Purpose: Grieving builds resilience, acceptance, and empathy toward ourselves and others.

TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

2 Corinthians 4:7-9

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”

KINTSUGI (金継ぎ) (Kint-sue-gee) = GOLDEN REPAIR⁶

- Kintsugi is an ancient Japanese art of repairing broken ceramics, highlighting their cracks to create something even more refined.
- Kintsugi shows that broken objects should be proudly displayed, not hidden.
- Kintsugi shows that adversity can be transformed into strength and beauty.
- Kintsugi teaches that healing-recovery and embracing imperfections can lead to greater strength.
- Kintsugi shows us that challenges can be reframed to find meaning in life.
 - Kintsugi = golden repair. “Kin” = golden and “tsugi” = repair.
 - Each repaired piece is unique due to the unpredictable way ceramics break.
 - **YOU ARE UNIQUE & YOU POSSESS TREASURE!**

NOTES:

ENDNOTES

1. All Scripture references in Syllabus Eleven are from the New International Version (NIV) translation unless otherwise indicated.
2. Google: **What distinguishes prolonged grief disorder from depression?** / Tidsskrift ([https://tidsskriftet.no/en/2017/04/klinisk-oversikt/what-distinguishes-prolonged-grief-disorder-depression#:~:text=Loss%20of%20a%20loved%20one%20through%20death%20is%20a%20known,a%20loved%20one%20\(1\).](https://tidsskriftet.no/en/2017/04/klinisk-oversikt/what-distinguishes-prolonged-grief-disorder-depression#:~:text=Loss%20of%20a%20loved%20one%20through%20death%20is%20a%20known,a%20loved%20one%20(1).)); Google: **The Impact of Grief on Mental Health and How to Cope / SupportiveCare** (<https://www.thesupportivecare.com/blog/the-impact-of-grief-on-mental-health-and-how-to-cope#:~:text=Depression%20and%20Grief,frequently%20triggers%20anxiety%2Drelated%20symptoms:>)
3. Google: **The Benefits of Crying / January 9, 2023 by Dr. Jody Stern** (<https://www.josephsternmd.com/2023/01/09/the-benefits-of-crying/>)
4. Dr. Brueggemann is an American Protestant Old Testament scholar and theologian who is widely considered one of the most influential Old Testament scholars of the last several decades. He is also a student of Biblical lament. Google: **The Costly Loss of Lament (University of Toronto PDF)** (http://individual.utoronto.ca/mfkolarcik/CostlyLossofLament_WBrueggemann.pdf)
5. GOOGLE: **5 Stages of Grief: The Kübler-Ross Model / Positive Psychology** (<https://positivepsychology.com/grief-stages/>); Google: **The 7 grief stages and how they help the grieving process | HCF** (<https://share.google/JpRISRbpL0FYb3Z9F>); Google: **Do the 5 stages of grief really exist? - Co-op Funeralcare** (<https://share.google/ReYmd4YfcQz5yhbvS>); Google: **The 7 Stages of Grief: A Path Through Loss and Healing** (<https://www.16personalities.com/articles/the-7-stages-of-grief-a-path-through-loss-and-healing>)
6. Google: **The Japanese art form of kintsugi: embracing the imperfections of life (Mayo Clinic)** (<https://connect.mayoclinic.org/blog/living-with-mild-cognitive-impairment-mci/newsfeed-post/the-japanese-art-form-of-kintsugi-embracing-the-imperfections-of-life/>)

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