

Six Needs of Grieving

1. The need to have our pain witnessed.

We need the help of others to walk with us and provide support as we learn to carry our grief in our own way.

2. The need to express our feelings.

We need helpers to listen with patience, respect, and empathy as we navigate all the different emotions of grief, guilt, relief, loneliness, anger and so many others.

3. The need to release the burden of guilt.

We need support in letting go of guilt after a death of a loved one. Feeling guilt following the death of a family member/loved one is normal; it is the "mind's way" of trying to establish a sense of control over circumstances which were outside our control. The mind replays the sequence of events to identify conditions in which we would have "prevented" death from taking place. In our grieving, we need support in changing the "what ifs" to become "even ifs". It takes time and patience to do this work.

4. The need to be free of "old wounds".

Throughout life, we experience different kinds of loss, such as deaths of family members and friends and other traumatic events such as loss of jobs, friendships, pets, homes. We often project the feelings we had during prior traumas onto the most current grief situation. The goal is to learn to identify our old wounds and find ways of acknowledging them without being activated by them.

5. The need to Integrate pain and love.

Often, this process may include many "small steps and acceptances" experienced over time. However long it takes- to begin to experience grief with less pain and more love-, no matter how intense the pain is now; feelings don't last forever. It will change over time.

6. The need to find meaning in life after profound loss.

This need is characterized by moving from the past into the present, recognizing our connection with the person we have lost remains; appreciating connections we can have with others will have significance. It is acknowledging the decision to continue to live.

Notes from presentation by: David Kessler- March 21, 2023