



Same family. Different grief.

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No two people grieve in exactly same way. Even in the same family, where everyone is grieving over the death of the same person, the grief will vary from one to the other. So why do we grieve the way we do - here are some reasons that explain why.

Who the person was and what they meant to you. This is all about the quality of the relationship you shared - how close and loving? How dependent? Was there ambivalence that created lots of ups and downs? How has this affected your plans and dreams with them?

It's important to note that it's often not the case of how long you knew the person but rather how strong was your connection to them?

Often the death of a younger person or a child may seem more unfair and is harder to accept than that of an older person so the grief is heightened as well.

How the person died. Was the death expected? If the person was ill, did you spend time with them? Were you the carer? Do you feel in any way responsible for the death? Were you there when it happened? Did you talk together about the things you needed to say to each other? Was the death sudden and unexpected, leaving you totally unprepared? Was there violence? An accident? Suicide? Drowning? Do you hold someone to blame? Was this reported in the media? Was there a police investigation?

Are there unresolved issues in the relationship? Do you have 'unfinished business' - if there was no time to say *goodbye* or *sorry* or *I love you* or to forgive them for a wrong? This has the potential to heighten your sense of guilt and remorseful thoughts.

Your personality. How do you usually act under stress? Are you more of an optimist than a pessimist? How are your problem solving skills? Do you speak with ease about your feelings or are you more inclined to keep them to yourself? Do you have a history of mental illness? Does your family expect you to behave in a certain way? Do you have expectations of yourself to be the 'strong one' who takes care of decisions and the rest of the family? Are you open to counselling if you needed it?

What do you do to help yourself - relaxation, meditation, exercise, eat well, get enough rest, yoga, walk, massage, music, write about your feelings, have a spiritual connection, be patient and kind to yourself?

Are there other critical events in your past that are still up in the air or other concurrent troubles? Often unresolved issues from past events return when we are facing a current crisis. Or if we have additional situations going on right now that are troublesome we can become overburdened – too many issues to deal with at once. It can result in confusion, overwhelm, helplessness, fatigue and an overload of emotions.

What kind of support do you have? Who looks out for you? Don't kid yourself that if you have a huge circle of friends, colleagues (and Facebook friends!) that they equal support. Support means someone who stays in touch regularly and for the long haul. These friends check in with you, listen to you, let you cry if you want to and don't expect you to grieve in a certain way and to their time frame. That's support.

Doris Zagdanski is the Convenor of MyGriefAssist website. She is a leading figure in modern day grief and loss education. She conducts educational seminars for both professional and community audiences. She has written several books in this genre and they are available at www.allaboutgrief.com