



NTSAD

NTSAD FAMILY CONNECTIONS

For Newly Bereaved Families | Month Six

Primary vs Secondary Grief

BY SARA SCAPAROTTI, JOEY'S MOM

The death of a child, or a loved one often leads to many subsequent losses that occur in addition to, and as a direct result of, that first loss. The initial loss is often referred to as the Primary Loss, and the losses that follow are identified as Secondary Losses (you can think of them as the subsequent dominoes that fall as a result of the initial circumstance). As always with grief, these losses are all unique to our own relationship with the person we have lost, personality, life situation, and other factors.

Shortly after our youngest son Josiah (Joey) was diagnosed with infantile GM-1 I left my job outside of the home to become his primary caregiver. It was not an easy decision, but it was the solution that seemed to work best for our family at the time. The potential loss of a career and our depleted savings account didn't faze me while caring for our son – I was fueled (and potentially blinded) by a deep sense of purpose, and the desire to give Joey the best life possible. It wasn't until after he died, while processing the many layers of grief with my therapist that I realized the impact of the 'hidden' losses – a job, financial stability, endless dreams, not to mention my identity, and many other factors. I now needed to acknowledge and grieve each one of these in order to heal.

I can't tell you what secondary losses you will experience, but here are a few examples to get you thinking about what secondary losses may be a part of your own grief experience:

- **Loss of life purpose/identity (no longer a parent, no longer a caregiver)**
- **Loss of self-confidence**
- **Loss of faith/belief system**
- **Loss of hope for the future**
- **Distance/loss of unsupportive friends**
- **Distance/loss of family relationships due to conflict resulting from death**

Remember, these secondary losses are a normal part of this unfortunate experience. Our grief over them is real and important. It needs to be addressed and mourned just as we would with our primary loss.

"Of all the things my hands have held, the best, by far is you." - Unknown

Resources:

FINDING A SKILLED THERAPIST OR COUNSELOR

In the linked article the Miss Foundation provides helpful tips on how to find a therapist or counselor that meets your needs. View the article, [here](#).



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The Importance of Marriage and Family Therapy

BY KELLY HOFFMAN, M.S. MFT

I remember sitting across from couples and families during their first session of Marriage and Family Therapy, and thinking, "I wish they had come to me sooner". Often times people see therapy as the last resort. They opt to get help only when they are overwhelmed mentally and emotionally by hurt and broken relationships and don't know what else to do. While therapy will help tremendously in such a situation, so much pain and hurt can be spared by choosing to engage with a good Marriage and Family Therapist and allowing their expertise to guide you and your family through the painful and unique experience of losing a child with a life-limiting illness.

A good Marriage and Family Therapist will not only help you and your partner manage the pain and sorrow of your individual experiences, but will also facilitate keeping your relationship and family relationship system as a whole as intact and free from unnecessary pain as possible. If you have other children, seeing a Marriage and Family Therapist will help you see immediately any ways that they may be internalizing blame or shame or guilt and nip it in the bud with love and support. When choosing a therapist, please know that an experienced Marriage and Family Therapist will approach working with young children non-verbally, through play, drawing and games in order to reach them on their terms in a non-threatening way. A good therapist's goal will be to help you keep sacred and safe your family's love for each other, while helping you navigate individually and as a family the love and grief you all share for the child you have all lost.

Six Months Later: My Journey Into Grief

BY MICHAEL BURCHAM VIA LINKEDIN

"Today is the 6 month anniversary of Ryan's death. And, as I have done on each of the previous milestones, I'm sharing a bit of my journey and lessons learned.

When I lost Ryan, I made a choice not to cheat my grief. Wherever this journey took me, I would embrace everything grief brought me. Now, 6 months into the journey, I've found sadness, anger, pain, rage and terror. I have felt torn into pieces. I have stared into total emotional abyss - and I simply let it swallow me. And there, in the middle of the hurricane of pain, I found overwhelming peace by facing, embracing, sharing and acknowledging it all. Here are the **10 most important lessons** I have learned in this first 6 months of grief:"

The mention of my child's name may bring tears to my eyes, but it never fails to bring music to my ears. If you are really my friend, let me hear the music of her name! It soothes my broken heart and sings to my soul! - Author Unknown