



NTSAD FAMILY CONNECTIONS

NTSAD For Newly Bereaved Families | Month Eleven

"Sometimes it's ok that the only thing you did today was breathe."

- Unknown

The Grief Coaster: Understanding Stress in Grief

ADAPTED FROM BY ELEANOR HALEY FOR

WWW.WHATSYOURGRIEF.COM

Stress is a given, whether it's experienced in response to major life events or minor everyday occurrences. When life is going okay, your stress ebbs and flows. It's kind of like one of those little kiddie roller coasters – all small peaks and tiny dips.

When something terrible happens, your stress level rises dramatically and you may feel as though you've boarded a 'Mega Mind-Blowing Super Stress Coaster'.

The stress experienced after the death of a loved one is kind of like a 'Mega Mind-Blowing Super Stress Coaster', except grief has many uncomfortable peaks and goes on for an unpleasantly long time.

Research has shown that everyday, ongoing, chronic stress can be just as harmful as a major stressful event to your mental and physical well-being. Unfortunately the 'Grief Coaster' includes a major life event *and* ongoing chronic stress.

The Internet has no shortage of articles on stress, but a specific discussion about grief and stress certainly couldn't hurt considering all the potential stressors associated with the death of a loved one. In this article, we'll address the experience of stress in grief and coping with stress.

Read the full article on the ups and downs of grief, [here](#).

What Helps? A Veteran's Perspective on Navigating Grief

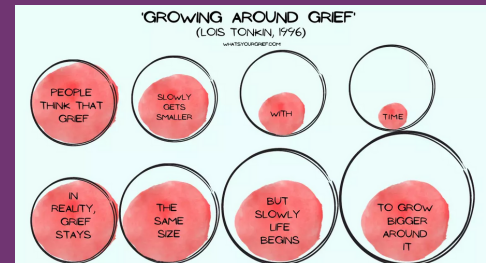
BY MONICA GETTLEMAN, BROOKE'S MOM

Throughout the first year after your child's passing, it can be difficult to find ways to meet your immediate grief needs. Through the fog of grief and loss itself you may not know where to turn, or even where to begin in finding things that help you both process *Continued on page 2*

Resources:

Growing Around Grief

Read the blog post, Growing Around Grief, [here](#).



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the intense feelings of loss you're enduring, as well as developing a plan for how to manage them, both now, and in the future. Here, some veteran parents of loss share what helped them in those early stages.

Bonnie, Adam's Mom

"Bereavement counseling. Having a trusted grief counselor throughout the first year after Adam died really helped me work through all the emotions and "firsts" during that time. As the anniversary of his death approached, it was even more important to be able to turn to my therapist for emotional support and her continued reassurance that I wasn't going crazy...that my experiences and reactions to such a profound loss were normal, and even necessary to process my grief."

Sharon, Harry's Mom

[As the year went on] "we were planning what we could do to honor the anniversary that was coming up. We donated a rocking chair to the local NICU. And we started organizing the next golf outing. We really wanted a tangible way that we felt we could help other people."

Becky, Miss Elliott's Mom

"I think what helped me the most is what I still recommend to others, and that's letting them know they can simply 'be' wherever they are in that moment in time. My brother, who lived three hours away offered to just drive over and sit with me on the sofa. He said we could talk about it, or he could just stare at me in silence. No one can fix it and I always appreciated it when someone gave me the space I needed and didn't try to fix it to make themselves more comfortable. It takes so much time to see your way through it. Presence is comfort in and of itself."

Wendy, Billy's, Mom

"I have 3 kids and always wanted to talk about Billy just like I did Eddie and Katie, normalize him. My first year was helped a lot by caring for Katie who was born 4 weeks before Billy died, although it was also very challenging. Waking up every day with her prevented me from just withdrawing. Of course, I had Eddie too, but he was in school."

Monica, Brooke's Mom

"Just having my best friend listen to me and talk about Brooke. I found that other people felt uncomfortable hearing me even say Brooke's name. My family didn't talk about Brooke, but my best friend Joanne always listened. Like Wendy, I had Carly to take care of. Since Carly was born six months after Brooke passed away, it helped me not give in to just laying around and feeling sorry for myself."

Navigating Triggers

BY SARA SCAPAROTTI, JOEY'S MOM

Adapted from: <https://www.joincake.com/blog/grief-triggers/>

Grief triggers are anything that cause you to revert into your grief without warning. Sudden and intense feelings of distress, pain, and sorrow usually accompany them. Some of the more common triggers are milestone dates like birthdays, anniversaries, diagnosis day and holidays. *continued on page 3*



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Although you may anticipate that these days will be incredibly tough on you, your response to them may not fully manifest until you experience such a triggering event. Other types of grief triggers may sneak up on you. You may be going about your routine having a good day, and seemingly out of nowhere, grief will strike and overwhelm you. Although anything can serve as a grief trigger, below, you'll find some common examples.

Examples of Grief Triggers

- Milestones – graduation (kindergarten, high school, college, etc.)
- Special Occasions - holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and other special days throughout the year
- Favorite Song
- Smells or Sounds
- Lost Opportunities - Bring Your Child to Work Day, father/daughter or mother/son dances, vacations



GRIEF RECOVERY CENTER

Mental Health and Counseling Services

6 Strategies to Overcome Triggers During Your Grief Recovery

Adapted from: [6 Strategies to Overcome Triggers During Your Recovery](#)

There is no written manual or predictable patterns on the types of grief triggers you may experience after the loss of a loved one. Triggers are unexpected, and the intense emotional reaction you may have because of them can be terrifying.

The following suggestions are simply a few strategies that can help you overcome grief triggers long-term.

Write Down Triggers in a Grief Recovery Journal

It may be worth the extra preparation to carry a notebook when you are out and about so that you can note down specific grief triggers that cause you to feel overwhelmed. Self-reflection through journaling has been found to be very therapeutic for the grief journey.

Make Sure You Have a Distraction from Certain Triggers

After you have familiarized yourself with specific grief triggers and know what to expect when a potential place, date, or inanimate object may flood you with emotions, it is important to be well-prepared for those triggers that can remind you of the pain of your loss. In your grief recovery journey, there will be many times where you will be faced with triggers that will cause you to mourn all over again. It is in these times that it's crucial to plan a distraction, whether to be around loved ones or planning a trip with friends so that you don't feel the crash of loneliness as you are reminded of your loss. *continued on page 4*



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Reframe Your Internal Dialogue for the Benefit of Your Grief Journey

If you are a private griever, it is essential that you are intentional and aware of your internal dialogue. The way you speak to yourself when you are alone during your grief recovery process can have a considerable effect on whether grief triggers can take control of your perspective of loss. Unfortunately, your thoughts and the way you talk to yourself are usually at their lowest points when you are grieving.

Negative self-talk is a very destructive grief trigger because it involves internalizing guilt and shame from questions like, "what if I did..." or "what if I didn't..." When you wonder what could have happened, you are unnecessarily punishing yourself for something that is probably out of your control.

Being Well Prepared for Unexpected Triggers

For those unexpected grief triggers, you can also be prepared for them as well if you know what to expect when the feeling of loss returns. The course of reliving grief can be daunting, but if you understand where it stems from and you are primed for the flood of emotions you'll experience, there's a better chance of managing grief triggers. The next step is to accept the fact that anything can trigger your feelings of loss.

Reach Out to Your Network

Other coping strategies, when faced with grief triggers, can also include having a healthy network to lean on when negative emotions become overwhelming. Find people in your life where you feel safe and are encouraged to talk to about your loss.

Work on It, As It's Inevitable

It's normal to want to avoid grief triggers and the negative emotions associated with them. But, to deny your feelings is to allow it to build your anxieties around it. Allow yourself to face your sense of loss and the feelings that follow. It is okay to feel depressed as you grow through your grief journey. There is no time frame for your grieving process. But, if grief triggers begin to impact your daily functions, it may be best to seek professional help to re-establish balance and direction in your life.

"Grief is like the ocean, it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim." - Vicki Harrison