

Moving Forward:
The grief & ambiguous loss associated with caring for someone with dementia
 Karen Tennyson MSW, LCSW, CDR
 Dementia Care Specialist of Rock County




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Definitions

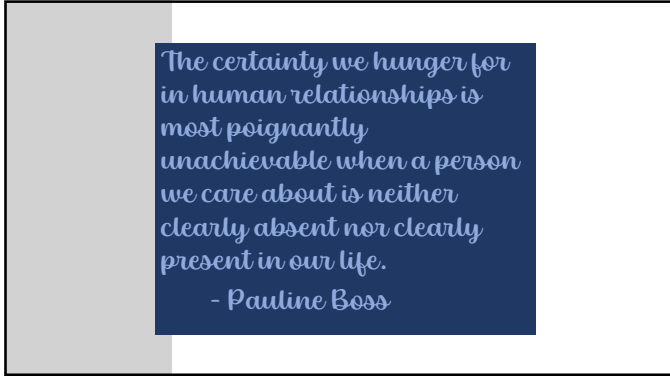
<p>Feelings of grief</p> <p>a collection of our internal thoughts and feelings about our loss</p>	<p>Mourning</p> <p>when you take the grief you have on the inside and express it outside of yourself</p>
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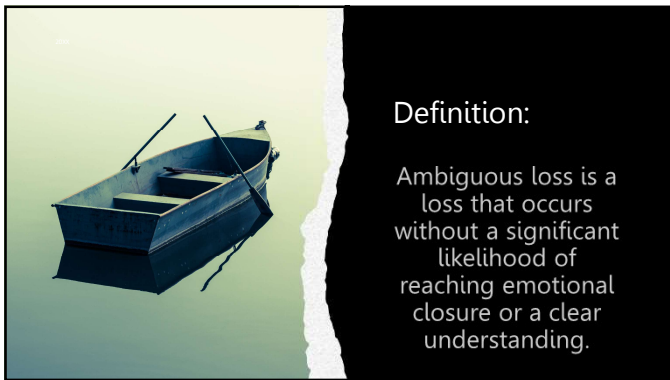
"There is nothing more painful than mourning someone who is still living."



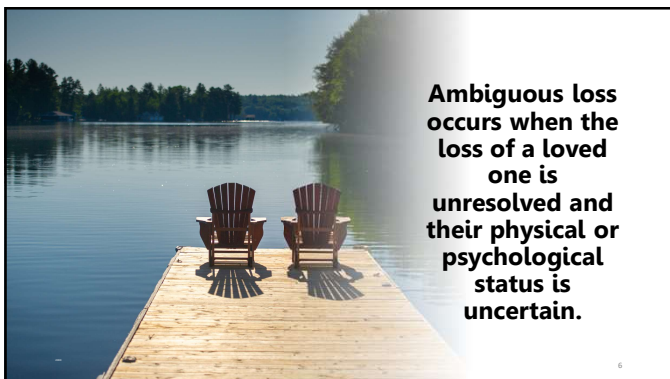
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Examples

Physically Absent & Psychologically Present

- Missing people
- Child leaves for college
- Adoption
- Miscarriage

Physically Present & Psychologically Absent

- Addiction
- Depression/Mental Health issues
- Divorce
- Dementia

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Signs & Symptoms of Ambiguous Loss

Hopelessness

Depressive symptoms

Confusion

Anxiety

On-Going Stress

Headaches

Digestive Issues

Dietary Changes

Sleep Pattern Changes

Self Medicating

Body Tensions & Aches

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Grief - a collection of our internal thoughts and feelings about our loss.

Depression - is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness & loss of interest.

Mayo Clinic

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The DSM further defines depression...

1. Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day.
2. Markedly diminished interest or pleasure in all, or almost all, activities most of the day, nearly every day.
3. Significant weight loss when not dieting or weight gain or decrease or increase in appetite nearly every day.
4. A slowing down of thought & a reduction of physical movement observable by others, not merely subjective feelings of restlessness or being slowed down.
5. Fatigue or loss of energy nearly every day.
6. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive or inappropriate guilt nearly every day.
7. Diminished ability to think or concentrate, or indecisiveness, nearly every day.
8. Recurrent thoughts of death, [recurrent suicidal ideation](#) without a specific plan, or a suicide attempt or a specific plan for committing suicide.
9. To receive a diagnosis of depression, these symptoms must cause the individual clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The symptoms must also not be a result of substance abuse or another medical condition.

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Summary

Feelings of Grief	Depression
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Behavioral health symptoms ▪ Physical symptoms ▪ Can maintain daily functioning ▪ Intensity of feelings & symptoms are not as intense & lessen with time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 5 or more behavioral health & physical symptoms ▪ Has to include depressed mood or loss of interest ▪ Symptoms intensity & duration significantly affect daily function for an extended period of time

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Eat well, sleep well & exercise regularly

Prepare yourself for triggers like holidays & anniversaries

Seek therapy if needed

Identify trusted resources

Join a support group

12 Ways to Cope With Ambiguous Loss

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More Suggestions for Coping with Ambiguous Loss

Acknowledge and identify what you're feeling: it's important to name your feelings. You need time to learn how to cope, understand what is happening and take better care of yourself.

Validate your feelings: know that whatever you feel, it is valid. Give yourself permission to feel grief, anger, loss, etc.

Spend time with friends, family and mentors: share your thoughts, feelings and fears with whomever you perceive as being safe, comforting and non-judgmental.


Find comfort in religion/spirituality: spend time with people who share your religious or spiritual beliefs. Talk to your religious or spiritual guide if you have one.

Practice self-compassion: it's important to be kind to yourself and allow yourself to feel the mixed and confusing emotions that come with ambiguous loss. It's hard for us to really grasp this kind of loss as it challenges us to hold two beliefs at once – cognitive dissonance.

Aim for acceptance vs. closure: This kind of loss is very confusing and aiming for closure may set you up to feel worse. Before that can be an option, you must focus on accepting that this type of loss is happening and in that, you may find closure.

Use "Both/And" thinking: This is a perspective shift from "either/or" thinking and allows you to have more than two options. This can feel comforting as neither of the two options available may be ideal.


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Case Study One

Consider:
 Circumstance, duration, intensity
 Next steps
 Conversation starters
 Possible resources and referrals

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Case Study Two

Consider:
 Circumstance, duration, intensity
 Next steps
 Conversation starters
 Possible resources and referrals

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RESOURCES

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Resources Continued

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Contact Me

Karen Tennyson MSW, LCSW, CDP
Karen.Tennyson@rock.co.wi.us
 608/741-3615



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