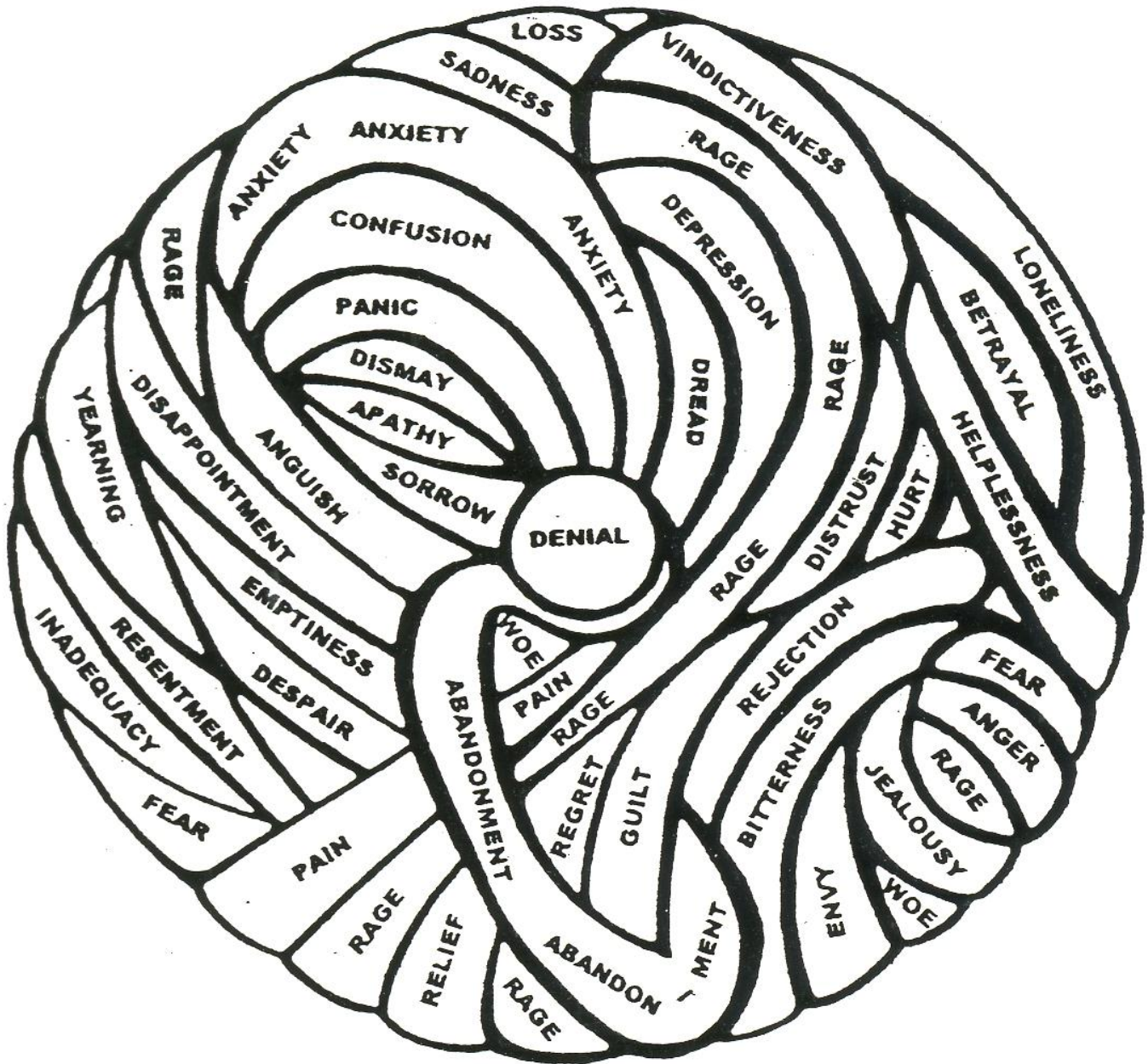


# GRIEF

## A TANGLED 'BALL' OF EMOTIONS



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# GRIEF

*Grief is a normal, natural, and necessary process of healing following a personal and significant loss*

## GRIEF IS NORMAL

All of us grieve after a personal loss. Grief is a normal, common experience, and the tears, sadness and pain of mourning are common to all who suffer a significant loss, particularly the loss of a loved one, a friend, or co-worker.

## GRIEF IS A HEALING PROCESS

The time it takes for emotional wounds to heal varies from person to person, and from loss to loss. But grief is always a process, like a road that one must travel. And as we travel that road, slowly but surely the pain and sadness will subside. It is important to know that – Grief is a healing process.

## PEOPLE WHO ARE GRIEVING SHARE COMMON FEELINGS

You may share some or all of these feelings there is no specific order.

**Numbness or denial:** It is very difficult to accept the reality of a severe loss, particularly in bereavements of disaster (due to the sudden, unexpected nature of the tragic event). Numbing and denial are very normal ways we protect ourselves emotionally – a period of “resting” – while preparing to deal with the loss.

**Distress & Anger:** Once the loss or death is confirmed and accepted, the numbness slowly subsides, and the grieving person begins to suffer the normal distress of the loss or separation. Often intense, this distress can be very painful, and may be experienced in physical ways such as weakness, fainting, difficulty breathing, and gastrointestinal discomfort. It is very normal to feel anger, protesting the loss. Because disaster losses or deaths are sudden, untimely and pointless, this anger can be intense. Since it is the anger of frustration, it is usually misdirected. But the anger is a normal response. Acknowledge it, accept it as normal, and talk it out with a caring “listener.” Or express it in non-destructive ways (hit a pillow, get off by yourself and yell). As your hurt heals, your anger will go away.

**Guilt:** It is not uncommon to blame yourself in some way. One common response is to feel guilty that you survived, while another did not. Many feel guilty about things they did or things they failed to do (“If only I had...”). This is very normal. Express your guilt feelings, and know you will move beyond them. Although painful, this is only a stage along the road of emotional recovery.

**DO NOT’S** – (1) Do not withdraw from the relative or friend. (2) Do not compare, evaluate or judge the person or their responses. (3) Do not look for sympathy for yourself. (4) Do not patronize or pity the person. (5) Do not say, “I don’t understand why you are still crying. Life goes on you know.” “Look, you only lost your \_\_\_\_\_. What about (so and so) they had a greater loss than you and she pulled herself together?” “No one should feel this strongly about losing a dog (or cat or any pet). It is only an animal and you had it for long enough; you can find another one.” “You shouldn’t feel that way.” “The past needs to be put behind us.” “At least he didn’t suffer.” “Be glad it wasn’t your only child.” “Be strong for the children.”

**WHAT TO SAY** – (1) “I am so sorry this happened to you.” (2) “I am so sorry.” (3) “It is harder than most people think.” (4) “Most people who have gone through this react similarly to what you are experiencing.” (5) “If I were in your situation, I’d feel very \_\_\_\_\_ too. (6) I will check back with you (say when) to see how you are doing. NEVER MAKE PROMISES YOU DO NOT KNOW IF YOU CAN KEEP!!!!

**HANDOUT provided by:**



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