

goodwords

news from the good grief center for bereavement support

Are Grief and Depression the Same Thing? Short Answer: No.

by Mark D. Miller M.D.

George Engel, a famous psychiatrist, said: "Grief is not a disease, but it can become one." The grieving process is universal and normal for all who lose a loved one. It occurs in every culture and has been documented throughout history. Grieving can be painful, but that does not mean that grief is an illness like major depression.

We all get "the blues" or feel "down" occasionally, but it passes in a day or so and doesn't interfere with our ability to work or keep up our household chores. Even though many people say "I'm feeling depressed today", mental health professions call this "little d" depression. In contrast, "BIG D" depression or major depression is a different animal. Major depression is a state of illness, in a similar way that pneumonia is a state of illness, and it can be every bit as serious, even fatal. Lasting two weeks or more, major depression includes persistent sadness or loss of pleasure accompanied by a distinct change in bodily functioning (insomnia, decreased appetite, weight loss, trouble concentrating, guilty feelings, poor motivation to do normal activities, and in the worst case, thoughts of death or suicide). It may have started out as a state of mind, but it can become an illness of the whole person; mind and body. An additional point for the elderly: Aches or pains — from arthritis, for example — will be magnified in intensity during depression. The good news is that major depression is highly treatable. Modern antidepressant medications are safe, effective and have far fewer side effects than ever before.

Some of the signs of grieving can look similar to major depression. Grievers often feel sad, irritable, nervous, worried, angry, guilty, and they can have trouble sleeping and keeping up with work and their other usual activities. How can depression and grief be distinguished? Should they be handled differently?

The grieving process is the emotional digestion of the role or roles the deceased played in the life of the griever. Legacies, children, years of shared life experiences, and memories (good and bad) often need to be reviewed and re-filed in memory in a safe location that allows the griever to move on to a new life without the deceased. Even one's concept of identity can be shaken up by the death of someone important. In short, grieving is work. It requires energy, a safe place to express it and enough time to work it through.

The time course is important to note in distinguishing grief and depression. The process of working through the loss takes time and it can be painful as well as insightful or anger provoking. During the grieving process it is common to neglect some duties, feel preoccupied, feel sad, and feel like searching for or hanging on to mementos or reminders of the deceased person. The work of grieving can go on for a lifetime but usually at far lower levels of intensity and it becomes more intermittent than constant over time.

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Most grievers don't know what to expect and have never felt like this before.



Dr. Miller is an associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh Medical School and is co-author of "Living Longer Depression Free" (A Family Guide to Recognizing, Treating and Preventing Depression in Later Life). Dr. Miller serves as Good Grief Center Board Chair.

GGC is moving to Squirrel Hill

We are most excited to announce that our new home will be in the heart of the vibrant community of Squirrel Hill in the Shops at the Morrowfield - 2719 Murray Avenue.

The primary reason for our move is that we have outgrown our current space. With only 1,200 square feet, the Good Grief Center does not have sufficient room for support sessions with individuals and groups, which are crucial among GGC's services for people who are grieving. We also cannot accommodate the growing number of staff, volunteers and interns.

With this more centrally located, handicapped accessible and larger space, the Good Grief Center will be able to better meet the needs of people throughout our region.

Highlights about the Good Grief Center on Murray Avenue:

- More space for current services with room for program expansion
- Accessibility will increase the number of people visiting GGC
- Convenient location for walk-ins
- Public transportation at our door
- Additional space to continue social enterprise development
- Handicapped accessible
- Closer proximity to universities and hospitals
- Additional space to expand the Center's library



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Supportive friends or family can help the grieving process along by encouraging the grieving person to talk. Any of the above should be fair game for discussion. Most griever's don't know what to expect and have never felt like this before. For some, the comforting support of others who have experienced grief can be immensely helpful. Organizations like the Good Grief Center provide a listening ear, validation, educational resources, and if necessary, referrals to other sources of help. Sometimes, professional help is indicated.

**"Grief is not a disease,
but it can become one."**

Now let's consider depression and grieving together. If you take a snapshot of a griever on any given day, they might appear to look depressed but this might just be their "grief work" going on. Can grief turn into major depression? You bet it can. This is what was meant when George Engle said, "Grief is not a disease, but it can become one." Those who endured prior episodes of major depression are at higher risk. Professional help should be obtained if a change from grief to major depression is suspected.

Our area has many helpful places to turn for help with grief and depression concerns. No one need suffer alone; no one need go without assistance or guidance.

message from the executive director

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter on May 13th I can't help but reflect on Mother's Day.

Many of the people (23%) who visit or call GGC do so because of the death of their mom. They often ask how they can possibly have a meaningful life without the one person who has always been there for them. They find comfort in telling a story or two about their mothers. And some even talk about how difficult it is to be a mom without having the wisdom of their own mother to help guide them.

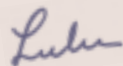
As Executive Director of GGC, I'm often asked what motivates me to do this work. In fact, I am asked that question followed by, "Who did you lose?" I respond, "My Dad, when I was 6 years old, was the first person and certainly the most significant."

Yes, having my father die when I was young has certainly affected my life greatly BUT what motivates me to do this work is my mother. I witnessed how she not only survived, but thrived as a young woman with 4 small children. It's feeling her strength and her compassion that come from her very core. It is that strength and compassion that she has carried with her for so many years that motivates me and inspires my work.

I am often told by people who "get" what GGC is all about that they realize the value of our services to the entire community because each and every one of us will experience grief in our lifetime. There are not many services out there that really are for every single person. No, not everyone needs grief support but the fact that it is available is a huge relief to the many we serve.

The connection here is that each and every one of us also has a mother. So, share a story about your Mom while she is still alive and after she is gone continue sharing those stories. Just as every mother is different, so is the way each of us experiences grief. Remember, there is a safe place where your stories and your sorrow will be heard and respected.

Thanks Mom, and thanks to all
of our GGC supporters,



Comments? Suggestions? Send us an email at
support@goodgriefcenter.com
or visit our website at www.goodgriefcenter.com
412.461.1776

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Lucie

Having this under 'good' news may be an oxymoron, but it is news nonetheless.

Lucie Van der Veer, our Program Manager for over 2 years, has left GGC. Lucie is taking some time away from work to focus her attention on, and spend time with, her family. As many of you know, Lucie was an integral part of the GGC team. Needless to say, she will be greatly missed. Lucie remains committed to the mission of GGC and promises to stay involved. We thank her for her dedication and for sharing her talents with us. ~ ABL

Social Enterprise Intern

GGC is thrilled to have Jennifer Schaefer as a full time summer intern.

Jennifer is a student at the Heinz School at CMU. She is pursuing an M.S. in Public Policy and Management with a concentration in Social Entrepreneurship and

Innovation. The focus of her internship is one of our social enterprises, the Good Grief Care Package. It will be a great help to have someone on board to nurture and grow Care Package awareness and sales.



Blue Star Marker Installed

Thanks to the Garden Club of Munhall, a Blue Star Marker was installed in our Good Grief Center Memory Garden. The Blue Star Marker honors those who serve in our military, past, present and future. It reminds us all of the sacrifices they – and their families make, every day. It was quite the event – complete with bagpipes and Color Guard!



Mitzvah Day

The Good Grief Center Memory Garden was chosen as a project for Mitzvah Day and boy does the garden look great!

Mitzvah Day is a collaborative effort between Rodef Shalom and Calvary Episcopal Church. Teams of volunteers from both places go out into the community on a Sunday afternoon to offer their time and talents to a number of non profit organizations. About a dozen volunteers came to GGC. They weeded, pruned and mulched. A great team effort and many thanks to all who took part!



Bereavement Support Groups

Meeting at the Good Grief Center

Open Group

2nd & 4th Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Daughters without Mothers Group

1st Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Parents who have suffered miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death

1st Monday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Meeting at the North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center

802 McKnight Park Drive, North Hills

Young Spouse/Partner Group

1st Saturday of each month
9:30-11 a.m.

Young Adult Support Group

1st Saturday of each month
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

GGC maintains a comprehensive listing of support groups throughout the region, please call 412-461-1776 for information.

Wish List

As you can well imagine, we have many needs with our upcoming move. Please review this list and let us know if you are able to make a GGC wish come true. We are most grateful for any and all assistance with making this move as easy and affordable as possible. If you have an idea for something we may need that isn't listed here, please don't be shy, just give us a call at 412-461-1776 or drop us an email at support@goodgriefcenter.com

- Building materials, i.e. drywall, lumber, etc.
- Office furniture
- "Living room type" furniture
- Filing and storage cabinets
- Bookcases and display racks
- Refrigerator
- Dishwasher
- Microwave
- Kitchen supplies
- Paper shredder
- And always, plenty of Kleenex!



Increase your fuel perks by purchasing gift cards for GGC.

The Good Grief Center operates as a non-profit under the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, a 501(c)(3) organization, which serves as our fiduciary agent.



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munhall, pa 15120

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