

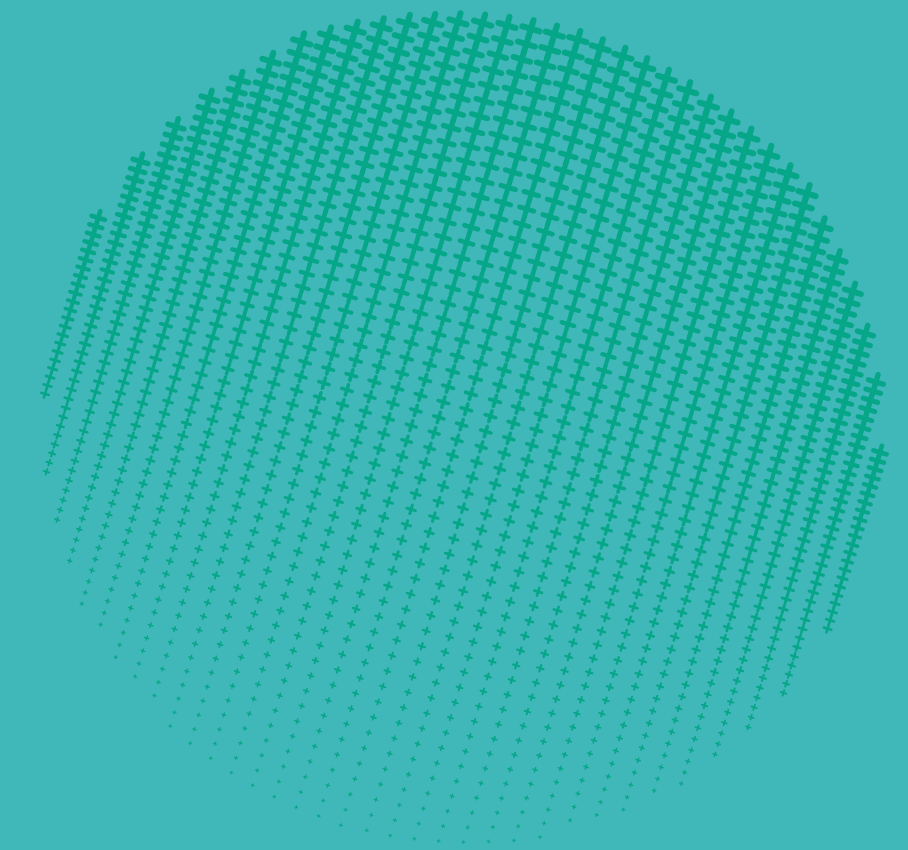
# LOSS AND GRIEF

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# Introduction

In life everyone is bound to face losses

Grieving over death and other losses is a natural and necessary process that most people are able to experience, and emerge from in a healthy manner.

Unfortunately, many people lack the support they need to help them resolve the pain of mourning.

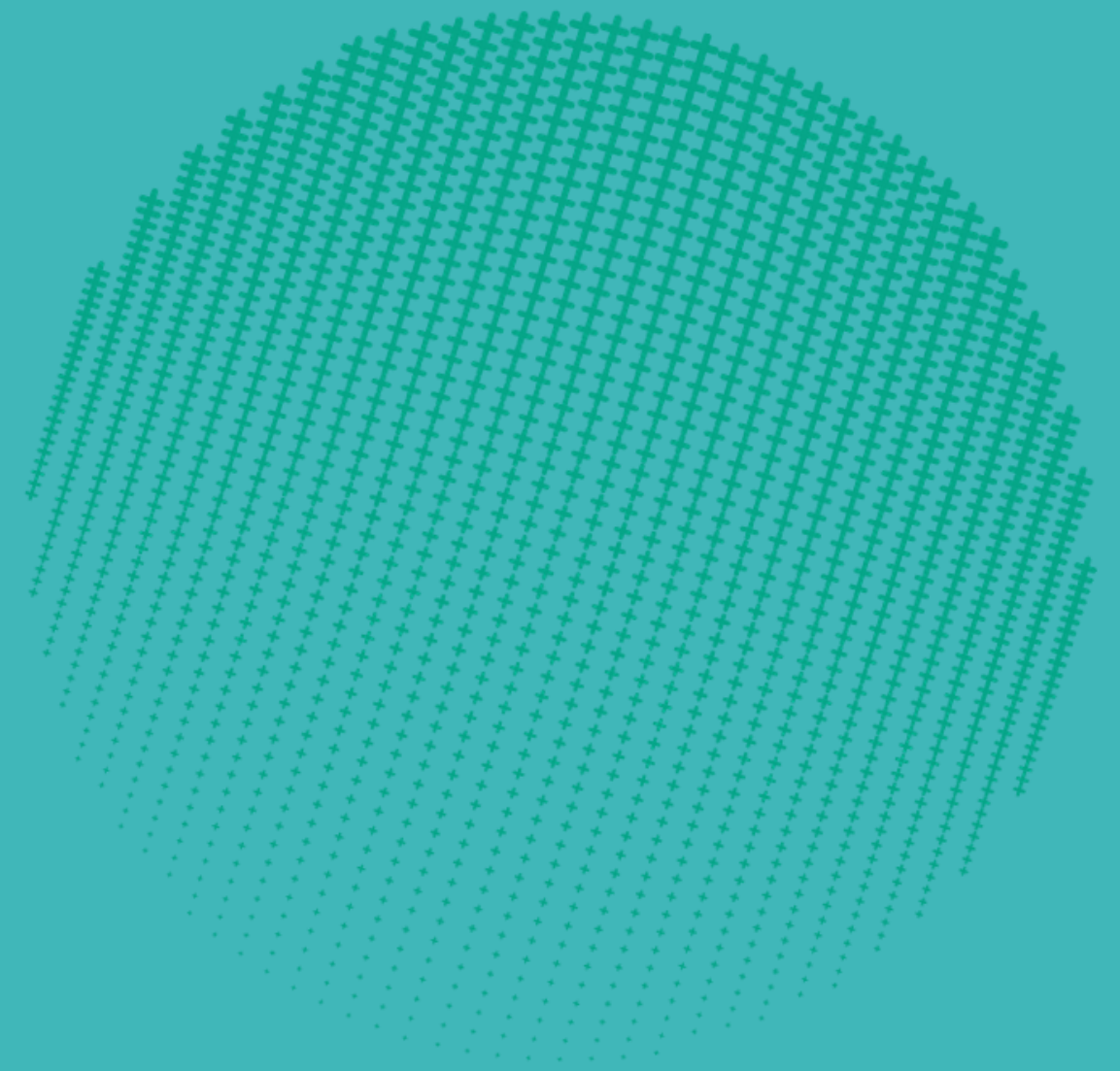
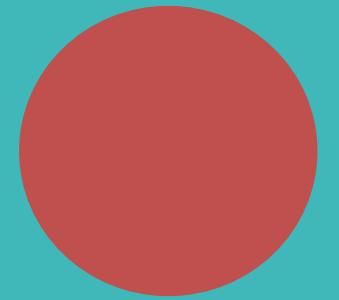
Grief, often surfaces as the underlying cause of various problems.

*Grief is the price we pay for love.  
Without attachment there would be no sense of loss.*

*Dr. Colin Murray Parkes, a British psychiatrist*

# Loss

- ✓ The state of being deprived of something or someone.
- ✓ Physical separation which may be temporary or permanent.
- ✓ It can be a person or a property/item which is valued and cherished.
- ✓ It can be through relocation from one place to another, completion of school which might lead to loss of friends, could be divorce between couples, loss of love through death of a loved one.
- ✓ It could be loss of body parts due to accidents or medical procedure, loss of virginity through rape and incest etc
- ✓ Loss of social status: Employment, Marriage, Parent etc
- ✓ Self loss – Respect, dignity, reputation, impotence, Terminal illness, pregnancy etc
- ✓ Developmental losses – Greying hair, menopause, retirement etc



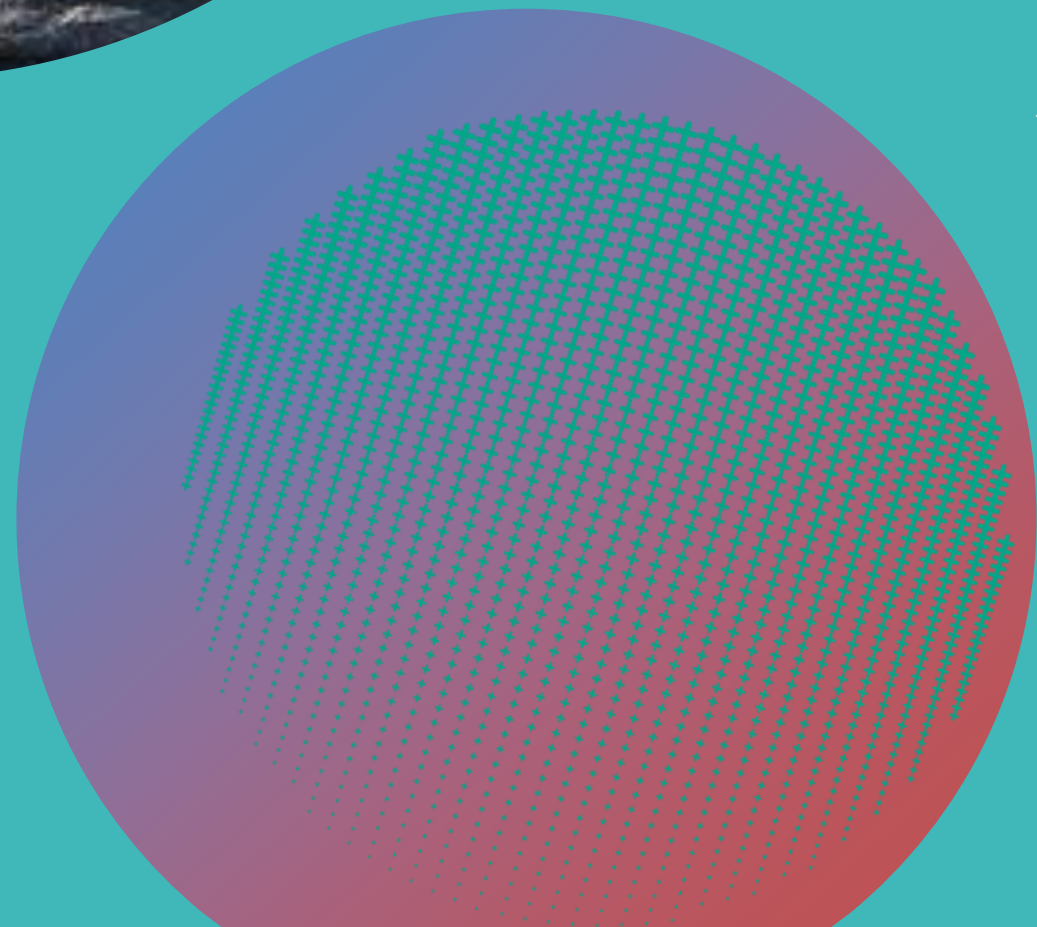


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## Grief:

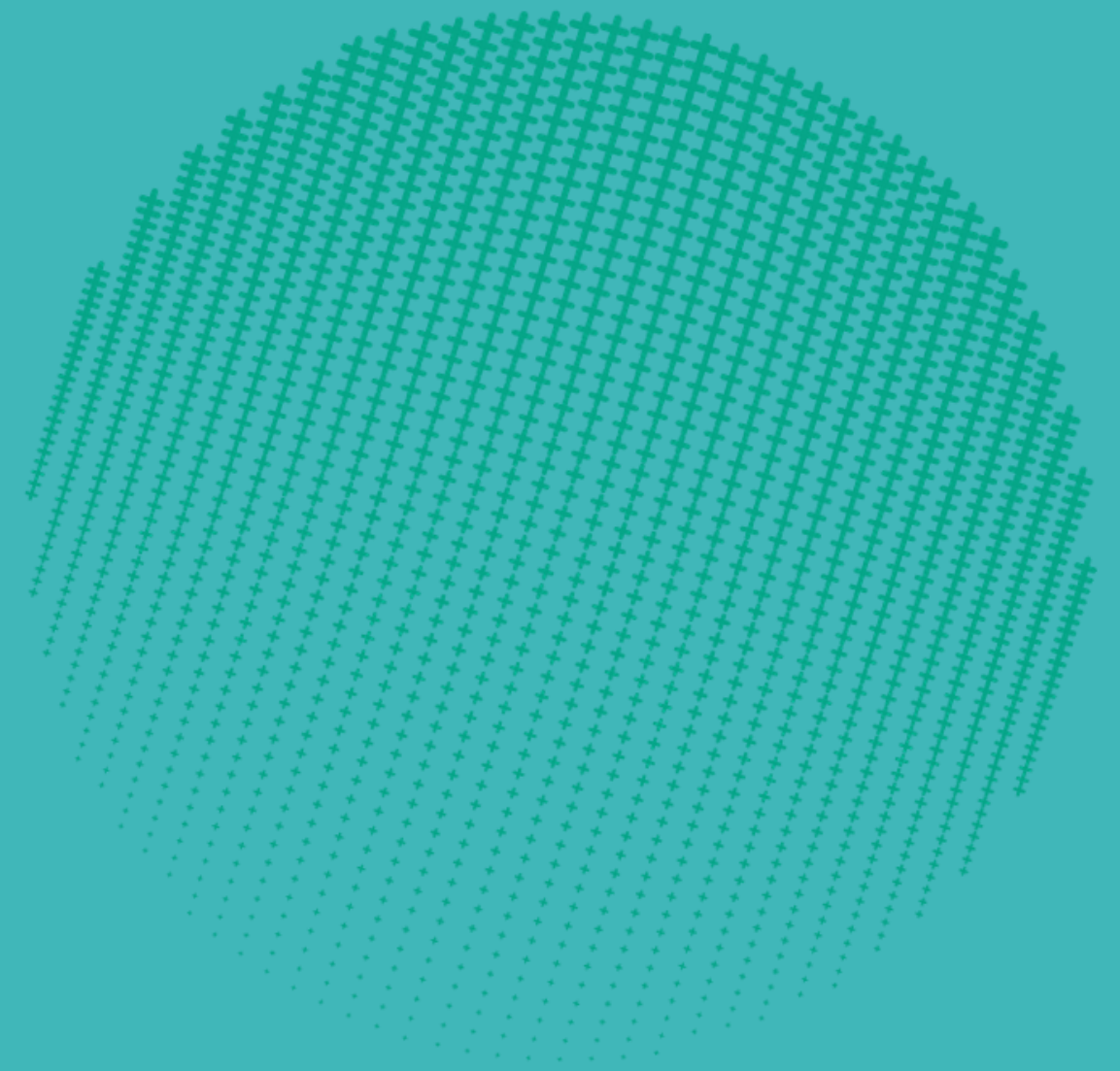
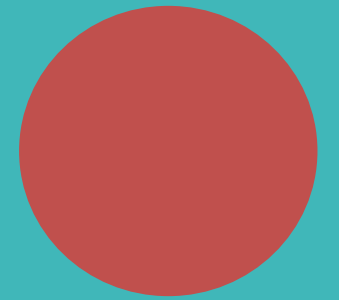
- ✓ Is a natural and complicated emotional response to loss.
- ✓ It's a deeply personal experience, impacting individuals in unique ways and manifesting in emotional, cognitive, physical, and behavioral dimensions.
- ✓ It covers a range of feelings such as sadness, confusion, anger, and despair following the significant loss.
- ✓ It's a process of adapting to life after loss, involving various stages and reactions as individuals navigate their emotions and seek to find a new sense of normalcy amidst the absence or change that the loss has brought.
- ✓ Understanding death is a complex concept for children, and their understanding progresses as they mature.
- ✓ Typically, children under the age of five might have a limited understanding of death, often perceiving it as temporary or reversible.
- ✓ Between age's five to seven, they might begin to recognize death as permanent but still struggle to fully understand its irreversibility and universality.
- ✓ From about eight to twelve years old, children tend to have a more concrete understanding of death as a permanent and inevitable part of life, though the full emotional and abstract knowledge continues to develop into adolescence and beyond

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# Grief

- ✓ At adolescent stage, they are aware that death do exist
- ✓ Given that this is a period when they are struggling with identity and independence issues, their lives are characterized with intense emotions and reactions which include anger, withdrawal, depression, acting out, confusion and frustrations due to hormonal surge.
- ✓ When they experience a loss, it's like adding more big emotions to their already very busy feelings.
- ✓ This can make everything even more confusing and hard for them.
- ✓ They might get very sad or very mad, feel lost, or even act in ways that are not usual for them.
- ✓ The loss makes their already busy emotions even more mixed up and tough to handle.



## Determinants of Grief

The experience of grief, though deeply personal, can be influenced by several determinants.

**Some key factors include:**

### **Nature of the Loss**

- ✓ The type of loss (e.g., sudden, anticipated, traumatic) can significantly impact the grieving process.

### **Relationship to the Deceased**

- ✓ The nature and significance of the relationship with the person who passed away influence the depth and duration of grief.

### **Individual Coping Skills**

- ✓ Personal coping mechanisms, resilience, and emotional resources influence how an individual processes and copes with grief.

### **Cultural and Social Factors**

- ✓ Cultural norms, beliefs, and social support systems shape how grief is expressed, perceived, and managed.



# Determinants of Grief

- **Previous Experiences with Loss:**
  - Past encounters with loss can impact an individual's response to subsequent grief, influencing coping strategies and emotional reactions.
  - **Age and Developmental Stage:**
    - Grieving can vary among different age groups, with children, adolescents, adults, and the elderly displaying different coping mechanisms and needs.
    - Understanding these determinants helps in acknowledging the complexity and individuality of the grieving process, enabling better support and guidance for those experiencing grief.

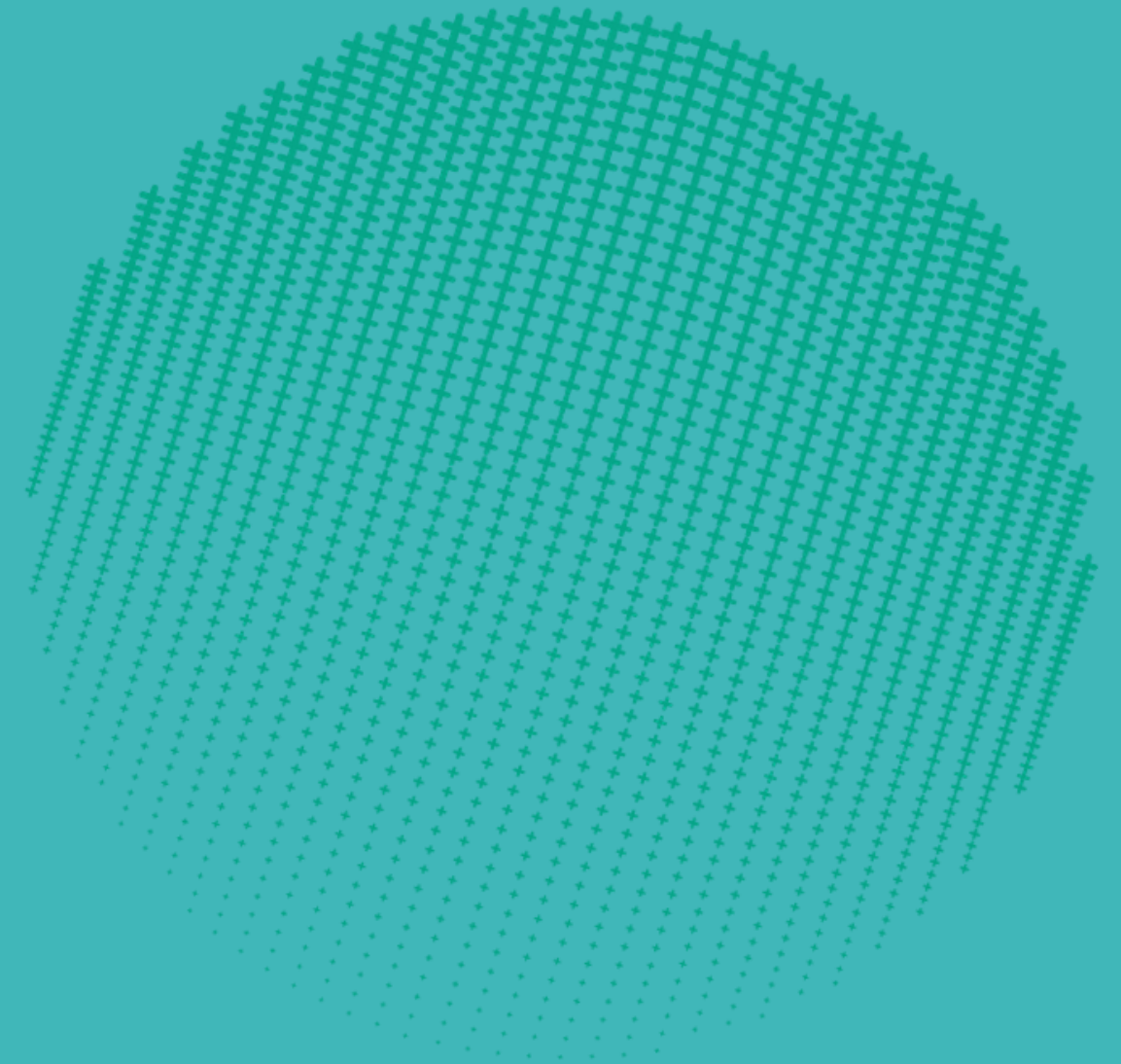
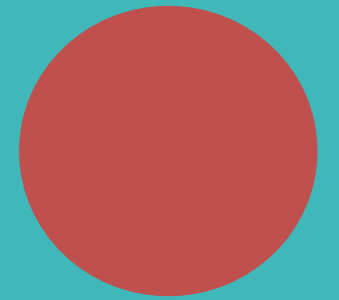


# Different types of grief

Grief isn't one-size-fits-all; it comes in various forms.

- ✓ Normal grief is what most people experience after a loss.
- ✓ Complicated grief is when the pain lasts a long time, making it hard to move on.
- ✓ Anticipatory grief happens before a loss, like when someone's seriously ill.
- ✓ Cumulative grief involves multiple losses piling up, making it tough to cope.

Each type brings its own challenges, affecting how people cope and heal after a loss.





## Different types of grief *cont..*

### **Delayed grief**

- ✓ This when grief reactions are suppressed, inhibited or postponed

### **Exaggerated grief**

- ✓ This is when the bereaved is overwhelmed by the intensity of the grief reaction resulting to maladaptive behaviors e.g. attempt suicide, drugs, sex,

### **Masked grief**

- ✓ This when reactions are repressed or concealed.
- ✓ Is where your body reacts to grief in ways that impair your normal day-to-day functioning, unable to recognize the link between your behavior and your grief.
- ✓ Most manifestations come in the form of physical ailments and abnormal behaviors not typically associated with a grieving person.
- ✓ May result in self-destructive behavior, suicidal thoughts, drug abuse, abnormal fears, nightmares, and even the emergence of underlying psychiatric disorders.

# Causes of Complicated Grief

## **Sudden, Traumatic Loss:**

- ✓ Abrupt and unexpected loss, such as accidents, suicides, or violent events, can lead to a more complicated grieving process for adolescents.

## **Profound Attachment to the Deceased:**

- ✓ Intense emotional bonds or strong attachments to the deceased individual can prolong and intensify the grieving process, particularly if the relationship was central to the person's life.

## **Lack of Adequate Support:**

- ✓ Insufficient social support or understanding from family, peers, or the community may prolong and complicate the grieving process.

## **Previous Loss or Trauma:**

- ✓ Past experiences of loss or trauma can exacerbate an adolescent's response to a new loss, making it more challenging to navigate the grieving process effectively.

## **Unresolved Issues or Regrets:**

- ✓ Unresolved conflicts, unresolved issues, or feelings of guilt or regret related to the deceased individual can contribute to a more complicated and prolonged grief response.



# Signs of Complicated Grief

- ✓ **Prolonged Intense Grief:** Grieving that is abnormally prolonged, intense, or significantly more distressing than expected for an extended period after the loss.
- ✓ **Difficulty Moving Forward:** A person experiencing pathological grief might have difficulty accepting the loss and moving forward with daily life or routine activities.
- ✓ **Social Withdrawal or Isolation:** Intensified withdrawal from social interactions, avoidance of friends or family, and isolating oneself from previously enjoyed activities.
- ✓ **Impaired Daily Functioning:** Compromised ability to perform daily tasks, such as attending school, managing emotions, or concentrating, which significantly impacts daily functioning.
- ✓ **Persistent Negative Behavioral Changes:** Observable negative changes in behavior, such as increased irritability, anger, reckless behavior, substance abuse, or an escalation in risky behaviors



# Stages of grieving

## ✓ **Stage 1: Shock and denial**

- ✓ Adolescents might initially deny the reality of the loss. They could avoid discussing it or act as though it hasn't occurred, finding it hard to accept the truth.
- ✓ They may not see meaning in the world as they ask themselves why this should happen to them
- ✓ Might experience shock and numbness in the initial stages when they receive the news or when they witness first hand

## ✓ **Stage 2: Anger:**

- ✓ Following denial, adolescents may feel angry.
- ✓ They might express this anger towards themselves, the deceased, others, the situation itself and/or even God for allowing it to happen

## ✓ **Stage 3: Bargaining:**

- ✓ Teens might attempt to negotiate or bargain for the reversal of the loss.
- ✓ They may express a desire to undo the loss or take actions to prevent it from happening again.



- **Stage 4: Depression:**

- Adolescents may experience sadness, low mood, and depression as they come to terms with the permanence of the loss.
- They might withdraw from social activities or show signs of prolonged sadness.

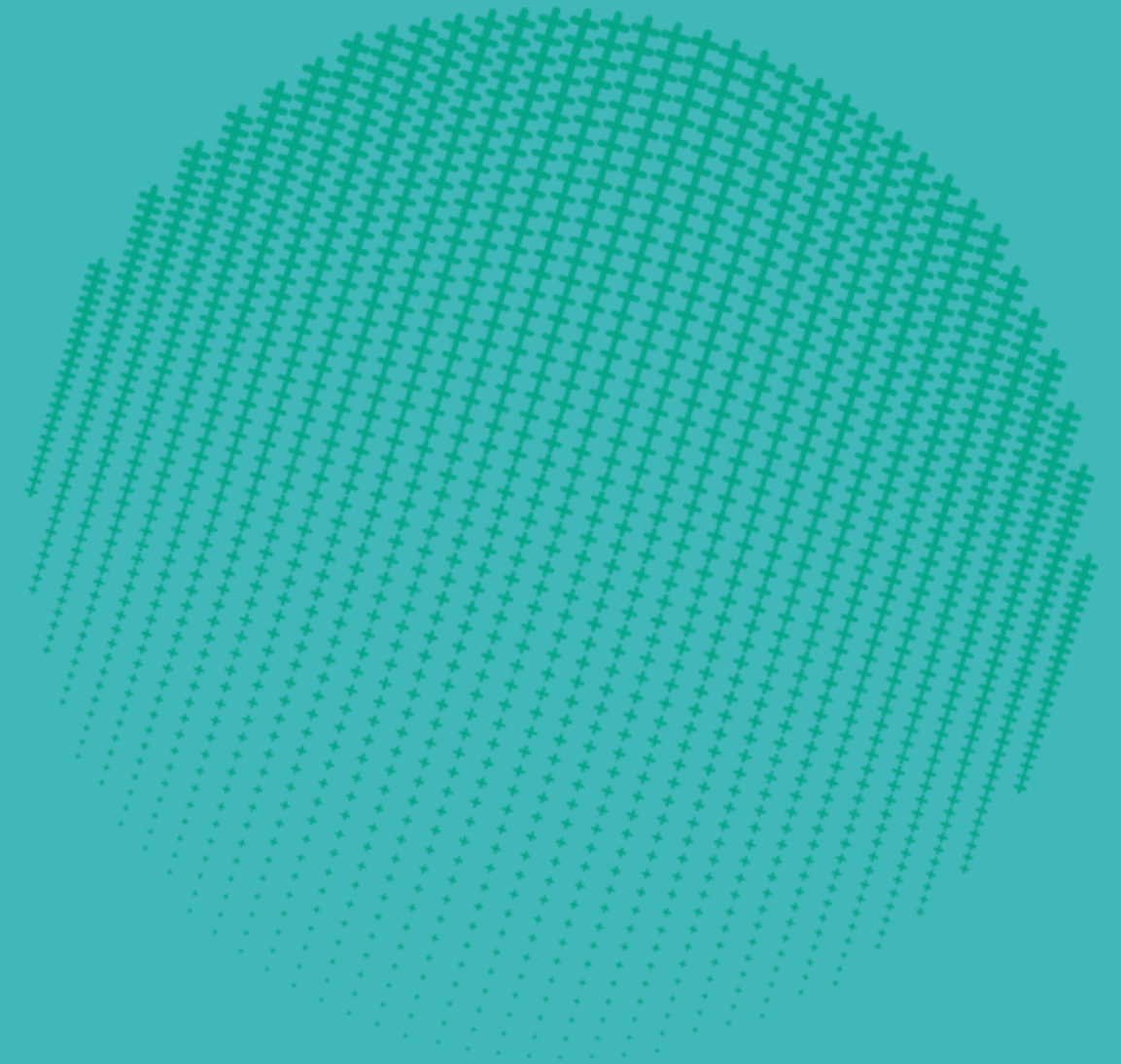
- **Stage 5: Acceptance:**

- Over time, adolescents might gradually come to terms with the loss, learning to accept it.
- This stage involves acknowledging the reality of the situation and finding a way to move forward while carrying the memory of the loss.
- Start acknowledging the loss as permanent and that they must start making plans to adjust to life without the deceased
- They start to invest in other people who may include relatives and peers so that they can be able to pick the broken pieces and live again



# Impact of loss and grief on adolescents

- ✓ **Emotional Distress:** Adolescents may experience heightened emotions, such as sadness, anger, confusion, or anxiety, leading to mood swings or emotional instability.
- ✓ **Behavioral Changes:** Loss can trigger changes in behavior, leading to social withdrawal, acting out, risk-taking behaviors, or disruption in daily routines and activities.
- ✓ **Academic Challenges:** Grieving adolescents might struggle with concentration, leading to poor academic performance, decreased motivation, or difficulties in focus and attention.
- ✓ **Physical Symptoms:** Grief can manifest physically, resulting in sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, fatigue, or general somatic complaints.
- ✓ **Impact on Relationships:** Adolescents might struggle in their relationships, experiencing difficulties in communication, isolation from peers, or conflict with family members due to the emotional distress from the loss.
- ✓ **Mental Health Implications:** Prolonged or unresolved grief can potentially contribute to mental health concerns, leading to depression, anxiety disorders, or increased susceptibility to stress-related disorders.



# Helping persons Cope with loss and death

## Encourage Open Expression:

- ✓ Create a safe space for the person to express their feelings, thoughts, and emotions freely without judgment.
- ✓ Encourage open dialogue, active listening, and validation of their experiences.

## Provide Stability and Routine:

- ✓ Establish a stable routine to offer a sense of security and normalcy.
- ✓ Consistency in daily activities, schedules, and rituals can provide comfort during a tumultuous time.

## Offer Supportive Networks:

- ✓ Connect the person with supportive networks, such as grief support groups, school counselors, or mental health professionals, to provide additional guidance and coping strategies.

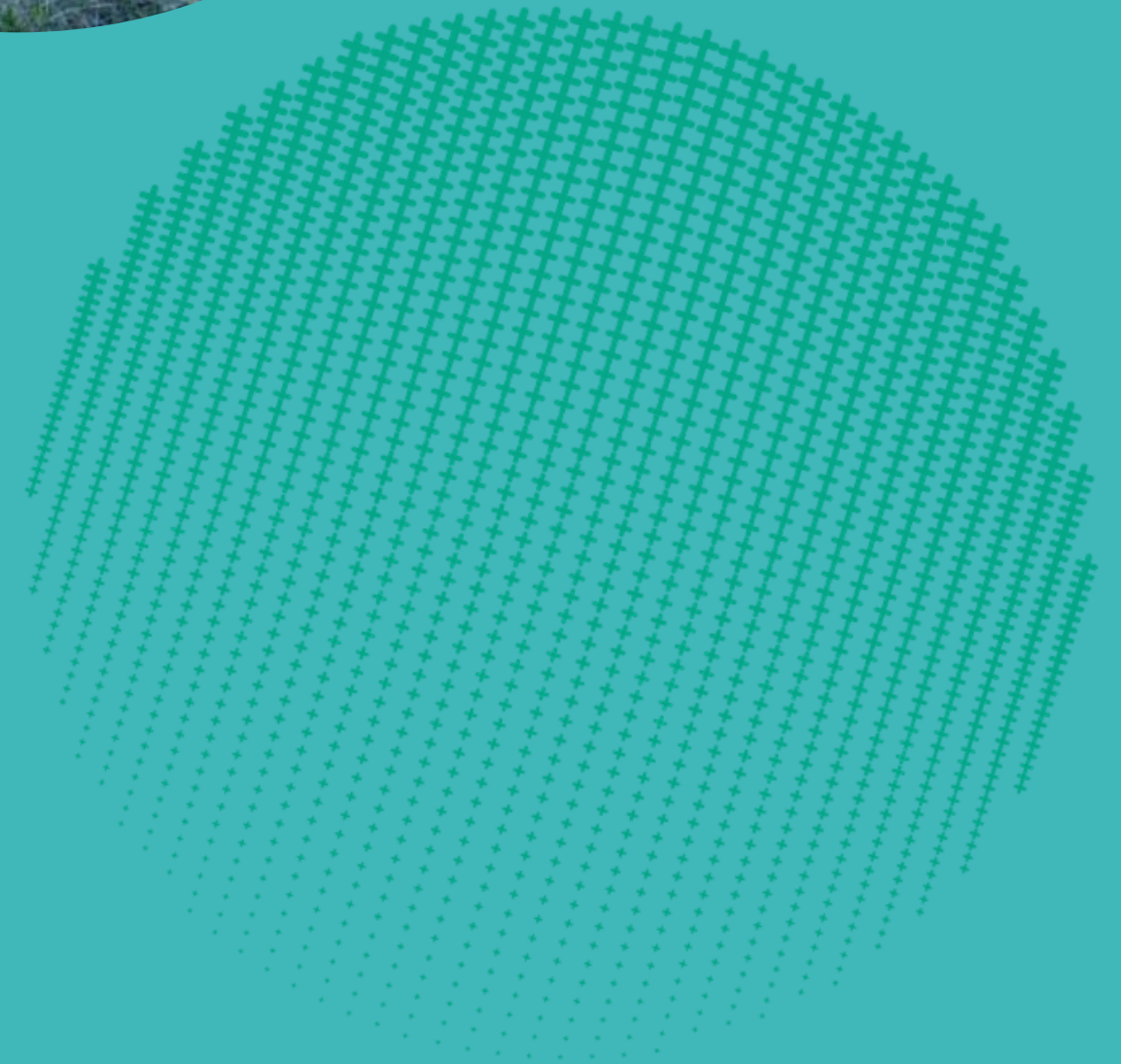
## Encourage Healthy Coping Mechanisms:

- ✓ Encourage activities that promote emotional well-being, such as engaging in hobbies, exercise, creative expression, or journaling, to help manage stress and express emotions.



# Normalize Grieving Process:

- ✓ Educate people about the grieving process, explaining that experiencing emotions like sadness, anger, or confusion is normal.
- ✓ Acknowledge that grief is a personal journey and allow them to navigate it at their own pace.
- ✓ Everyone has a way of reacting to a loss in their lives, whether a child or an adult.
- ✓ Much as discussions about loss brings anxiety, discomfort and avoidance reactions, talking about it helps people accept, cope with the loss and eventually move on with their lives regardless of the vacuum created.



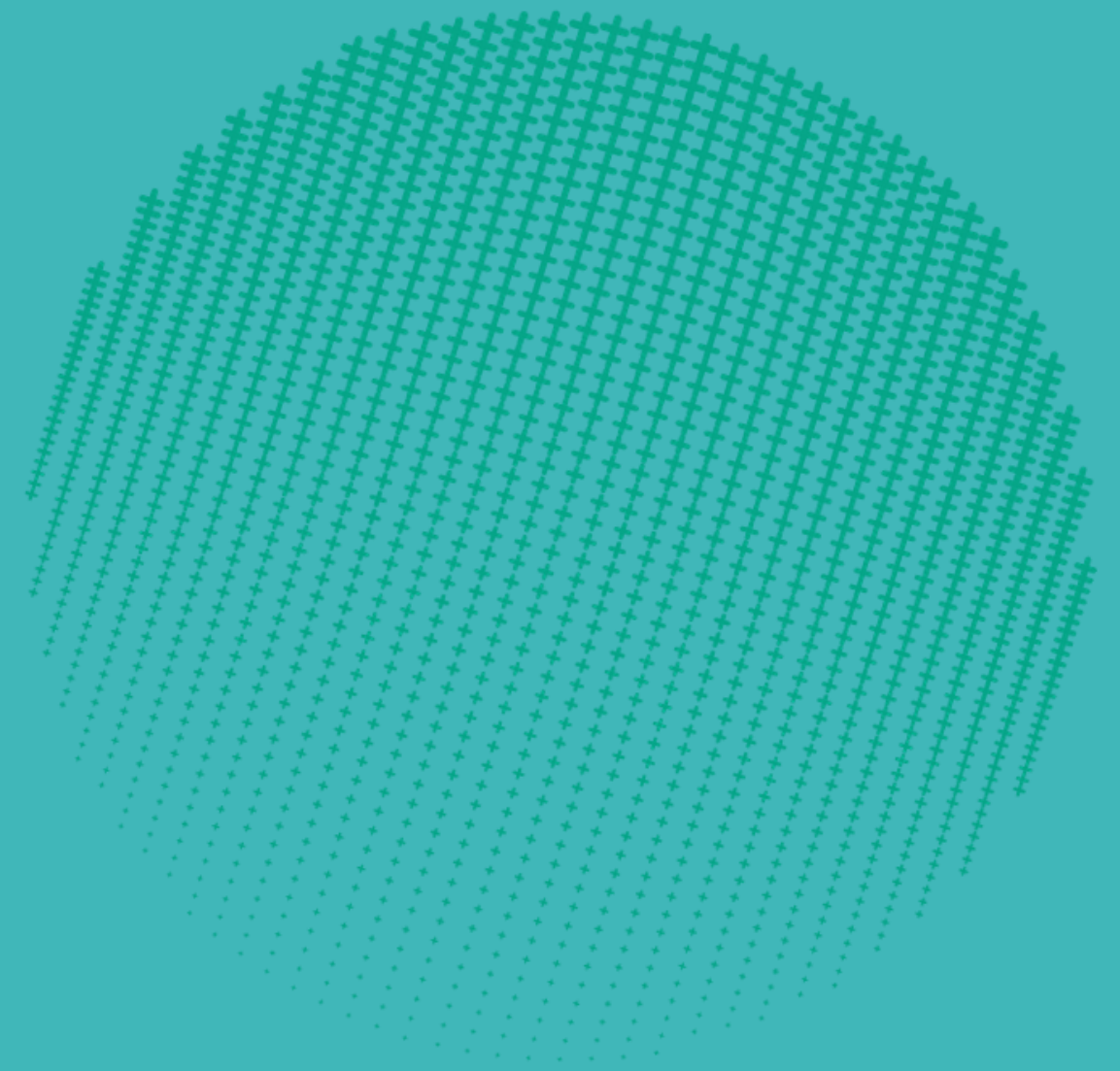
## Resilience And Post-traumatic Growth

- ✓ It is the potential that individuals may have for transformation after exposure to trauma, highly stressful events, and crises
- ✓ The growth is not a direct result of exposure to these events, but results from the struggle that an individual engages in with the new reality in the aftermath of the events.
- ✓ Healing - understand that in order to heal, one must be allowed and encouraged to mourn sometimes even long after the death.



# Conclusion

- ✓ Parents struggling with their own grief while supporting their teenagers face a challenging balancing act.
- ✓ It's vital for parents to acknowledge their own emotional struggles, seeking their own support and processing their grief in parallel with assisting their teenagers.
- ✓ By recognizing and addressing their personal grief, parents can authentically empathize with their adolescents, create an environment conducive to open dialogue, and demonstrate the importance of seeking help when needed.
- ✓ Taking care of their own emotional needs enables parents to better guide and support their teenagers through their journey of healing, fostering a stronger and more understanding parent-teen relationship."



**THANK YOU**

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