

**4 Ways to Know  
You Need Help  
*With*  
Your Grief**

How Grief Counseling Can Help You and  
Top Ten Tips for Coping with Grief

A photograph of a person walking on a beach at sunset. The sky is filled with soft, golden clouds, and the sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the scene. The person is a small silhouette in the distance, walking along the shoreline where the waves meet the sand.

**Beth S. Patterson, MA, LPC**  
Psychotherapist and Grief Counselor

## ***4 Ways to Know You Need Help With Your Grief***

Grief is to be expected after a loss –whether the death of a loved one or beloved pet, job loss, divorce or separation, illness, relocation, and even positive life changes that entail giving something up in order to grow. Grief can feel overwhelming. It affects us ***in all areas of living – physical, emotional, social, spiritual.***

We may have difficulty dealing with the intensity of grief on our own or even with the support of family and friends, and a grief counselor can be of great benefit at those times.

I am an experienced grief counselor and psychotherapist, and have helped many people successfully navigate their grief, and heal and grow in the process.

So, how do you know if you need help from a professional grief counselor? Here are some questions to ask yourself about your grief. If you answer “yes” to any of them, I can help.

### **1. Physical symptoms:**

- Are your thoughts about your loss preventing you from sleeping?

- Are you having nightmares?
- Are you waking up in the middle of the night and are unable to fall back to sleep?
- Are you exhausted, worn out, irritable?
- Is your grief making you physically sick?
- Are you overeating, especially carb or sugar loaded comfort foods?
- Have you lost your appetite since your loss?

## **2. Emotional symptoms:**

- Are you experiencing uncontrollable outbursts of anger?
- Are you blaming yourself for not doing “enough” to prevent the loss?
- Do you feel unnecessary guilt about what you “should” have done differently?
- Are you crying all the time?
- Are you fearful about more losses, overly protective or hyper-vigilant?
- Are you experiencing trauma, depression or anxiety since your loss?

## **3. Social symptoms:**

- Are you isolating yourself?
- Is your grief interfering with your work?

- Are you unable to maintain your close relationships since your loss?
- Is your grief impacting your marriage or love life?
- Are you ashamed to talk about your grief?
- Are you rejecting offers of support from others?

#### **4. Spiritual symptoms:**

- Are you questioning the things you always believed in?
- Do you feel that life has no meaning?
- Are you turning away from your religious or spiritual community?
- Are you angry at God or a higher being you always believe in?

#### **HERE ARE MY TOP TEN TIPS FOR COPING WITH GRIEF:**

1. Eat nourishing foods.
2. Get plenty of rest.
3. Exercise — especially walking.
4. Allow yourself to cry — and drink lots of water (crying is dehydrating).
5. Surround yourself with loving people.
6. Journal — Don't worry about grammar or spelling – just get the feelings out!
7. Meditate.
8. Take a warm bath.
9. Appreciate nature.

10. If your feelings are overwhelming or impacting your life and work, see a trained grief counselor or psychotherapist.

You may be feeling that your grief is so overwhelming that you wouldn't know where to begin with a grief counselor. Or, you might think that seeing a grief counselor or therapist is a sign of weakness. You might also feel that your grief is not as "bad" as someone else's, or that you shouldn't even feel grief about your loss. I have heard all of these concerns from my clients.

For example, one client was grieving the loss of her beloved pet. She was ashamed that her grief was so intense – after all, others told her "it was only a dog – you can always get another one." Another client was grieving after her ex-husband died. She believed that she didn't "deserve" to grieve, since they were no longer married. Another client lost his same-sex partner, and didn't know what to do with his grief and was angry that his partner's family excluded him from funeral preparations.

I recognize – with respect and without judgment – that grief comes in all shapes and sizes. No loss is too small or insignificant. I recognize that all types of love result in grief after loss. Validating my clients' grief and honoring their process is the first step in their healing. I provide a caring and safe environment for my clients to heal their grief, and in the process grow. Grief counseling provides an opportunity for true healing and transformation, and it is my privilege

and honor to walk alongside my clients as a partner on their path of grief and healing.

© 2013 Beth S. Patterson

<http://www.bethspatterson.com>