

LESSON FOUR: FREE TO GRIEVE, VICTORIOUS LIFE CHURCH- PASTOR WILLIAM A. LEE, JR.

STAGE FOUR AND FIVE: PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS AND PANIC

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. – Psalm 147: 3

He told them, “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.” – Mark 14:34

One Hospital chaplain after serving in hospitals for decades came to the conclusion that many of the patients who are ill are their condition due some unresolved grief situation. He states that In an increasing number of cases, usually the patient first went to see the doctor with a physical complaint and after developing a relationship with him, these people told him about some great loss they sustained during the past months or year or two. Many of these patients were discovered to be stuck and some stage in the grief process and with spiritual counseling they were able to move forward to better emotional, mental, spiritual and yes, physical health. Grief is not always thought of as a full-body experience. But just as grief can affect mental health, it can also have physical aspects. Physical symptoms may not come with every kind of grief. But intense grief—for example, that is caused by the death of a child or partner, career loss and relationship loss—can bring about side effects that may feel more physical than anything else.

WHEN GRIEF BECOMES A CYCLE- Many people aspire to finish grieving and move on with their lives in a healthy way. But some may find this is harder than expected because it is possible for grief to become a cycle. Sometimes memories of loss or of a lost loved one may light up the reward receptors in the brain. This means that moving on or “letting go” can be much more difficult. Those memories and the grieving process can feed into an addictive feeling. A cycle of grief can take a toll on a person’s physical and mental health. Continuing the grieving process for a long period of time means a person’s risk for long-term health problems is increased. What could have been a short-term symptom—chest pain, stomach aches, or sleep problems, for example—can manifest in much more serious ways.

In an article entitled: “When Loss Hurts” the author points of 6 common Physical Effects of Grief

1. **HEART PROBLEMS:** Heart problems can be brought on by intense stress in a variety of situations. But there are particular heart risks associated with grief. One study found the death of a loved one to increase a person’s chance of a heart attack. There’s also a specific temporary syndrome brought on by the death of a loved one called takotsubo cardiomyopathy, or “broken heart syndrome.” Broken heart syndrome is caused by a disruption in the blood being pumped to one section of the heart. Because of this, it mimics the effects of a heart attack—chest pain and shortness of breath—but is temporary. People with broken heart syndrome can undergo treatment for it. They may also choose to wait for the syndrome to reverse itself in a few weeks. It is important to note that if you experience

- chest pain or shortness of breath over a long period of time, you should consult your doctor for deeper causes. This is true for any other severe or long-lasting physical effects of grief.
2. **LOWERED IMMUNITY:** Some people catch colds or come down with the flu during times of immense stress. They may notice they are more susceptible to these same ailments during a period of intense grieving. This is because in adults, grief can lower the immune system. A 2014 study found that older adults experiencing grief, specifically due to the loss of a spouse, could not maintain a stress hormone balance. As a result, they experienced reduced neutrophil function. This means that during the grieving process, older adults are less likely to produce some types of white blood cells, leaving them prone to infections.
 3. **BODY ACHES AND PAINS:** Aches and pains are a common physical symptom of grief. Grief can cause back pain, joint pain, headaches, and stiffness. The pain is caused by the overwhelming amount of stress hormones being released during the grieving process. These effectively stun the muscles they contact. Stress hormones act on the body in a similar way to broken heart syndrome. Aches and pains from grief should be temporary. If they persist over the long term, consult your physician.
 4. **DIGESTIVE ISSUES:** The digestive tract can be sensitive to times of intense stress. It can be all too common to seek comfort in food during stressful periods or to experience a queasy stomach when anxious. Grief inspires these symptoms and others, such as a loss of appetite, binge eating, nausea, and irritable bowel syndrome. Knowing these symptoms are caused by grief can help alleviate them. When you feel an urge to eat when sad or notice you haven't eaten all day because of that same sadness, it can be a good indicator to call a trusted friend or licensed mental health professional to set up an appointment.
 5. **UNHEALTHY COPING MECHANISMS:** Overeating or not eating enough during the grieving process is only one unhealthy coping mechanism people may experience. Some can be more harmful than others. People may turn to alcohol or cigarettes, the overuse of which can have long-lasting effects on the liver and lungs. Others may engage in self-harming behavior, drug use, or other high-risk behaviors. All of these coping mechanisms can have intensely damaging, long-lasting effects on the body and brain. If you find yourself frequently engaging in behaviors like these to cope with grief, it is crucial you reach out to a trusted friend or licensed professional for help.
 6. **SLEEP PROBLEMS AND FATIGUE:** A 2017 study found that spouses who were bereaved by suicide had a higher risk of developing sleep issues. Sleep is supposed to be when the body and brain rest and repair themselves. Sleep disruption during grief can be especially frustrating. It can be debilitating to constantly feel both sad, anxious, and exhausted. Insomnia can be a common occurrence in those who are grieving. But it should only be temporary. A continued inability to sleep regularly or feel rested should be reported to your doctor.

Along with the cycle of grief that can bring physical symptoms those who are grieving will often experience panic. The panic is due to the grieving being unable to think of nothing else but the loss. Although effort is made to get their mind off the subject, and perhaps for a moment or two they can be distracted, but soon we are right back there. This often can hinder our effectiveness in anything we are trying to do and we find that we are not producing the work we are capable of. We start to worry about our mental health. We simply have major difficulty trying to concentrate. We must understand that the inability to concentrate in time of grief is just as natural as it can be. When a person is worried and feeling they are about losing their mind they become panicky and paralyzed with fear. It is the fear that we are going through something that is totally abnormal that can worsen this stage for many.

MANAGING GRIEF: It is important to seek help if you need it to regulate your mind-body connection. What gets thrown out of whack during the grieving process can, in fact, get back on track. Building a healthy routine can be a first step to mitigating some of the physical symptoms of grief. Regular exercise and a nutritious diet can help with pain, heart risks, digestive issues, and sleep patterns. Talking about grief with family and friends or a licensed mental health professional can help address the grief directly. Doing so may also foster the development of healthy coping skills. It is important to remember you are not alone. Asking for help may an important step during the grieving process. It can take time to heal, and that is normal. Grief cannot be rushed. But with love and compassion from family, and the help of a therapist, grief can come to an end.

Stay Hydrated

Drink plenty of water throughout the day and avoid excessive alcohol consumption, which acts as a diuretic and can actually dehydrate your body.

Get Exercise

If you regularly exercised before the death of your loved one, then try to continue that routine as much as possible. And if you led a sedentary lifestyle, then consider finding some time to exercise each day, such as taking your dog for a walk, riding your bike, or asking a friend to stroll with you in the local park or shopping mall.

Even moderate daily exercise can help you sleep better, help work out some muscle stiffness or discomfort, and can often lift your spirits and improve your outlook.

Eat Properly:

As noted above, griever often find it difficult to have a meal even if they feel like eating. At times like this, consider eating several smaller meals during the day if your schedule interferes with your usual breakfast, lunch, and dinner routine.

In addition, the foods you consume should consist of healthy, nourishing items rather than fast food or something you purchase from a vending machine. If you lack the time or energy to shop for groceries, consider asking a loved one to visit the market for you.

Get Rest

While grief typically disrupts our normal sleep patterns, getting proper rest is important. To whatever extent possible, try to develop a regular bedtime routine and schedule; minimize distractions, such as a television, iPad or tablet, or cell phone; and keep your bedroom dark. In addition, try to avoid caffeinated drinks for at least 3 hours before bedtime.

Encourage them to be open to new and different human relationships. At a time like this there is a tendency to want to run away from life and avoid anything new.

DIRECT THEM TO THE HEALER: Even church people underestimate the healing power on multiple levels provided for us in the atonement.

Isaiah 53:5

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

Luke 4:18-19

**18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**