Farm Families have unique risks and experiences in the farming way of life. Farm families often choose the lifestyle due to the pleasures of being their own boss and raising their family on a farm. But, farming is a high risk occupation both in physical safety and financial security. The natural environment with weather, market forces and hard work can end in either profit or loss. Loss is a reality to farming in the event a cow dies, a crop is flooded or the cash flow and finances even causes one to lose the farm.

Grief is experienced as normal and can even be healthy as one reacts to the loss of something that is loved and cherished. Dealing with grief is a learned skill to help one understand grief, not to overcome it, but process through it to hopefully return to normal functioning over time.

Loss is a life event where someone or something that is loved suddenly or slowly ceases to be a part of our lives. Dealing with an acute loss (barn fire, death in family) or a chronic loss (loss of profits over time), or an ambiguous loss (not sure of the what, how and whys of a loss) all need the process of grief to deal with the loss. Even though loss is typically bad, the “grief process” can be good in helping one deal with the loss and return to meaningful life.

Below is a graph of the grief process found very beneficial. The upper left begins with normal functioning before a stress event, loss or grief began. The magnitude and abruptness of the loss determines the amount of shock, denial, anger and anxiety that may occur and the associated feelings of avoidance, confusion, fear, blame, guilt and frustration that may surface in response.

At the bottom, even with “Good Grief”, feelings of being overwhelmed, depressed, immobilized with lack of energy, is an area of biggest concern as loss of hope may cause unhealthy decisions. Hopefully, through the struggle and reaching out in dialogue to others, exploring options and life without, a new acceptance can be attained, with a return to a meaningful life—life just different than before.

With grief, people often wonder--are YOU over it YET? With “Good Grief”, the goal is NOT to get over it, but to savor the memories of what was lost, and process through grief to return to a meaningful life in one’s own time.