

# Good Grief—We Just Lost....!!

“Dealing with Farm and Family Loss”



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**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.

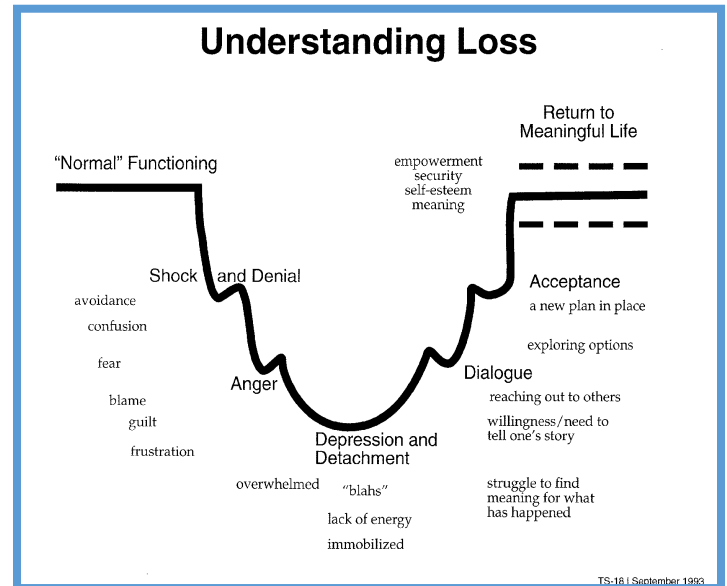
**Isolation** of many rural farm families is not a friend to the “Good Grief” process as extended family and community support is often the best medicine. Research shows people are often best helped by a friend or family member, even moreso than a trained counselor—though they may be very important in the process, too. Many sharp, entangled emotions go through the grieving person. When it is the loss of a dairy herd or farm, knowing this tradition is coming to an end, can cause farmers to feel shame and failure. An accident or loss of assets can cause farmers to feel guilt. Males are engrained to protect and provide for their families and feel at fault even though external market forces, which farmers have no control over, are making it difficult for many others to survive in the same farm climate. Know one is not alone!

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.

- Deacon Larry's “Good Grief” recipe:**
- Grief is unique—everyone needs their own recipe*
  - Grief takes time—let it work in due time*
  - Grief has loss—keep the memories alive*
  - Grief can cause anger—be aware in response*
  - Grief is messy—let the mind and body cry*
  - Grief is “extreme” stress—practice safety*
  - Grief tastes bitter—recall the happy times*
  - Grief can be lonely— others feel helpless*
  - Grief stops one’s world—the world moves on*
  - Grief needs empathy—but accept the sympathy*
  - Grief needs comfort—make healthy choices*
  - Grief needs exercise—“move” your spirit into it*
  - Grief needs hope—tend to feelings of despair*
  - Grief needs a smile, at least once in a while! 😊*

**Let Grief Build Strength to Survive**

**What We Didn't Think We Could—for “Good Grief’s” Sake!**  
Deacon Larry Tranel, Bereavement Minister



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.**