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## GRIEVING WELL

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Often, we think of grief as affecting us when we lose a loved one like a parent, a sibling, or extended family member to death. In fact, the grieving process happens any time there is loss. Moving to another part of town, changing jobs, or sending the kids off to college are all examples of events that have an element of loss to them. Even a really positive transition like having a baby, for instance, has a layer of loss to it as parents mourn the good night's sleep they used to have or the lack of freedom to go out to dinner without consideration for all of the baby equipment they must tote along. Simply growing older may bring loss of comfort or function. Sometimes we lose trust in someone we thought was trustworthy, and that is a particularly painful loss. Loss is a reminder of the impermanence of life, and sadness and grief signals that you cared. What was taken away mattered to you.....whether that was a person, a community, a material possession or some aspect of your life.

There is no typical response to loss: every experience is unique. Nor is there a "right" way to grieve, although there are unhelpful ways of coping with loss. Healing takes time; it can't be hurried or forced. Some people start feeling better after weeks; others need years. In the meantime, here are steps you can take to move forward.....it will not always be comfortable or easy, but it will help you to move to a better place.

Before healing can happen, there must be acknowledgment that loss has taken place. Pain is uncomfortable, but embracing the feelings of loss will help you get through them. Prepare to be overwhelmed as you begin to feel the strong emotions associated with loss, which may be hurt, sadness, shock, anger, guilt, anxiety, bitterness, hopelessness, or depression. In the midst of grieving, be extra gentle with yourself and lower your expectations of what you can do.....grieving is exhausting and will take extra energy. Lastly, remember that you are not alone. God promises to be with you through the worst of times and through intense grief. *"God comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."* 2 Corinthians 1:4

