



# Hard Times & Pain

*Love...Control...Direction*

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved.”

--Hellen Keller

“In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

--John 16:33b

## **Hard Times & Pain: An Introduction to this Series...**

*A series written by Stacey Sutkowski (11<sup>th</sup> grade LG Leader)*

Stopped in traffic on a not so good day, I noticed a bumper sticker on the car in front of me. It read: “Life is a series of temporary situations.” In the middle of hard and painful times, it is hard to lose sight of the fact that they are just temporary situations. Yet in the light of eternity, going through things such as a break-up, relocation, tragedy, death, loss, injury, defeat, divorce or illness, are so temporary. But keeping our eyes on eternity in the midst of difficult times is not easy. It’s easier to get wrapped up in the troubles of this world and forget about the glory that awaits us in the next.

In praying about this series and thinking about the difficult times in my own life, I decided to focus each week’s lesson around a question commonly asked about hard times and suffering:

The first question is: “Where’s the love?” – How many times have we wondered how God could truly love people if He allows such tragedy to occur?

The second question is: “Who’s in control?” – If God truly is for us and nothing can separate us from His love, but bad stuff still happens, then is He really in control of the universe? Does He have power over death, depression and defeat?

The final question is: “What do I do now?” – How can we practically deal with hard times and pain?

Going through hard times and pain is not easy, and helping others go through hard times can be even more challenging at times. However, the times when students go through hard times and pain is when they need the love and encouragement from the faithful men and women God has placed in their lives. The questions raised in this series are difficult to understand, but much of what we can do during difficult times is about having faith and trusting in God’s love, power, and provision. Encourage your students to struggle with these questions over the next three weeks and to seek God’s Word for some answers. My prayer is that through this series, students will learn to hold on to God’s promise of eternity as they deal with life’s temporary situations.

## **Hard Times & Pain: “Love”**

Stacey Sutkowski’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

Imagine this tragedy. First you lose a family member to sickness. The following year you lose all of your possessions and investments in a fire. Trying to move on, you plan a family vacation to try to forget the pain. Your five mourning family members travel ahead of you because you have something to take care of at home, but during their travels they are in a car accident, and four of them die. You and one other remain to bear the pain and suffering of your family’s tragic loss.

Although this seems unthinkable, this scenario is exactly what happened to Horatio Spafford in the 1870’s. He lost a son, four daughters, and all of his property through a series of devastating tragedies.

Putting myself in Horatio’s shoes, one big question comes to mind: How could a loving God allow such horrible things to happen to His people? If “God so loved the world...”, then where is the love in Horatio’s story? Where is the love in stories of abuse, divorce, incredible loss and untimely death? Where is God’s love in that?

This week, we are going to read two passages of scripture written by Paul. The first describes the suffering he endured while serving the Lord. The second passage is his own “blog” on suffering as he endured hardship, suffering, and persecution as he worked to spread the gospel of Christ. Finally, we’ll look at Paul’s letter to the Romans where he connects the dots between suffering and God’s love. Suffering develops perseverance; perseverance develops character; and character develops hope...hope in the power of God’s love...that the same God who sacrificed his beloved Son for sinful people has prepared an incredible future for those of us who put our hope in Him.

Horatio Spafford wrote the hymn, “It Is Well With My Soul” as his ship sailed past the crash site where his four daughters perished at sea. A devout Christian, Horatio understood the incredible hope that comes from trusting God. He understood that although difficult times come, our God of love offers a hopeful future. However, we all know it is hard to grasp the truth and fullness of God’s love, especially when we are in the midst of suffering. I hope that Horatio and Paul’s stories encourage students to hold on to a more eternal perspective when faced with hard times this year. I hope they can learn to trust in God’s love, purpose, and hope whether their life is filled with “peace like a river” or “when sorrows like sea billows roll”.

## HISTORY of "It Is Well With My Soul":

This hymn was written by a Chicago lawyer, Horatio G. Spafford. You might think someone who wrote a worship song titled, 'It is well with my soul' would have to be a rich, successful Chicago lawyer. But the words of this song were not written during the happiest period of Spafford's life. On the contrary, they were written during a time in Horatio's life when he had suffered almost unimaginable personal tragedy.

Horatio G. Spafford and his wife, Anna, were pretty well-known in 1860's Chicago. This was not just because of Horatio's legal career and business endeavors. The Spaffords were also prominent supporters and close friends of D.L. Moody, the famous preacher. In 1870, however, things started to go wrong. The Spaffords' only son was killed by scarlet fever at the age of four. A year later, it was fire rather than fever that struck. Horatio had invested heavily in real estate on the shores of Lake Michigan. In 1871, every one of these holdings was wiped out by the great Chicago Fire.

Aware of the toll that these disasters had taken on the family, Horatio decided to take his wife and four daughters on a holiday to England. Not only did they need the rest -- DL Moody needed the help. He was traveling around Britain on one of his great evangelistic campaigns, and Horatio and Anna agreed to join him. And so, the Spaffords traveled to New York in November, from where they were to catch the French steamer 'Ville de Havre' across the Atlantic. Yet just before they set sail, a last-minute business development forced Horatio to delay. Not wanting to ruin the family holiday, Spafford persuaded his family to go as planned. He would follow on later. With this decided, Anna and her four daughters sailed East to Europe while Spafford returned West to Chicago. Just nine days later, Spafford received a telegram from his wife in Wales. It read: "Saved alone."

On November 2nd 1873, the 'Ville de Havre' had collided with 'The Lochearn', an English vessel. It sank in only 12 minutes, claiming the lives of 226 people. Anna Spafford had stood bravely on the deck, with her daughters Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta clinging desperately to her. Her last memory had been of her baby being torn violently from her arms by the force of the waters. Anna was only saved from the fate of her daughters by a plank that floated beneath her unconscious body and propped her up. When the survivors of the wreck had been rescued, Mrs. Spafford's first reaction was one of complete despair. Then she heard a voice speak to her, "You were spared for a purpose." She immediately recalled the words of a friend, "It's easy to be grateful and good when you have so much, but take care that you are not a fair-weather friend to God."

Upon hearing the terrible news, Horatio Spafford boarded the next ship out of New York to join his bereaved wife. Bertha Spafford (the fifth daughter of Horatio and Anna born later) explained that during her father's voyage, the captain of the ship had called him to the bridge. "A careful reckoning has been made", he said, "and I believe we are now passing the place where the de Havre was wrecked. The water is three miles deep." Horatio then returned to his cabin and penned the lyrics of his great hymn.

### IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

Written by Horatio Spafford

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;

The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

*It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, with my soul,  
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

**GOAL:** (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

**INTRODUCTION:**

Tonight we will be looking at God's love during difficult times, and wrestling with how a loving God could allow people to suffer.

**PRAYER:**

God, life is hard. Sometimes I wonder how you could really love people if you allow bad things to happen to us. Open my heart to the truths You want me to know about Your love during hard times.

**MEDIA/ACTIVITY/INTERACTION:**

Read the story of Horatio Spafford...you may also want to play the hymn, "It is Well With My Soul"

1. Have you had a time in your life when things seemed to go from bad to worse?
2. Putting yourself in Horatio's shoes, how would you react to all this tragedy?

**TRANSITION:**

It's hard to see God's love during hard times. It's easy to wonder why God would allow such things if He truly loved us. Right now we're going to look at how one man in the Bible suffered, and how he was able to hold on to the truth of God's love in the midst of it all.

**SCRIPTURE:**

Read 2 Corinthians 11:24-27

1. How has Paul suffered?
2. How can you relate to Paul's suffering?
3. Do you believe God was with Paul? Why?

Read Romans 5:1-9

4. Paul is the author of this scripture as well. Is that surprising?
5. (v.3) According to Paul, how should we respond to suffering?
6. (v.4) What does suffering produce? Can you give a modern day example of how suffering can produce perseverance or endurance?
7. (v.5) Even during hard times, where can we put our hope?
8. (v.8-9) Paul encourages us to put our hope in the God who suffered greatly for us. Why is he using Christ's death on the cross to help us through our own suffering?
9. How do Paul's words speak to you? What can you hold on to from this passage that can help you feel God's love during hard times?

Read Romans 8:35-39

10. What does this passage say about God's love?

**TAKE AWAY:**

It may be difficult to understand God's love in the midst of hard times. It requires faith in what He has done for you and what He has promised to do for you. Paul wrote that NOTHING can separate us from the love of God. Is there a painful thing in your life that seems to be separating you from God's love?

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

God we know you love us. Help us to remember to hold onto your love during hard times so that we may learn to praise you during life's storms.

## Hard Times & Pain: “Control”

Stacey Sutkowski’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

It was the worst year of my life: the summer before 8<sup>th</sup> grade. My dad had just graduated from Seminary, and his first pastoral call took him to a little church in Illinois, which meant we had to move. At age thirteen, I was forced to leave everything that felt comfortable: my school, my friends, my neighborhood, and my church. Starting at a new school in a small town wasn’t easy. Everyone already had their friends and seemed content to talk *about* the shy, new girl rather than talk *to* her. Instead of getting to know me, they spread rumors about me: I was gay; I was mute; I was not allowed to go to dances. I spent my entire eighth grade year with no friends.

I remember thinking that if God truly called our family to this church in this town, then why was this happening to me? If we were meant to be here, then why was I having such a hard time? If God provided the church, then why didn’t He also provide friendly people to welcome me to this new place? My parents and I prayed together countless times for God to provide me with just one friend. But God did not provide me with any friends that entire year, and during that time, I couldn’t help but wonder...where was God? Didn’t He see what I was going through? Couldn’t He fix it? Was He really in control up there?

My one difficult year does not even begin to compare with Job’s suffering. Job lost his possessions, his land, his family and even his health and comfort. Having nothing except the painful sores covering his entire body, Job’s faith began to waver as he too, questioned why he was forced to endure such hard times. For thirty-five chapters, Job and his friends discussed the nature of Job’s suffering and tried to understand God’s purpose. I’m sure Job asked some of the same questions...Where are you, God? Why are you doing this to me? What are you thinking? Aren’t you in control? Can’t you fix this situation?

Finally, “the LORD answered Job out of the storm.” As I read God’s response in chapters 38-41, I cannot help but hear a twang of sarcasm in His voice when He questions Job’s own understanding of all things. “Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all this...Surely you know...you have lived so many years!” Spoken today, God may have said something like, “*Who do you think you are anyway, Job? If you seem to understand what does and doesn’t make sense, why don’t you take control of creation for a little while? Design the snowflakes and tell them when to fall. Knit together a child from nothing and help her grow into a woman.*”

Everyone endures difficult times, and it is normal to wonder where God is during the storm. We want to understand why suffering exists, and why we must go through hard times. But I think God’s response to us during hard times may be similar to his response to Job: *Who are you to try to understand my ways? You are just a child and I am the creator of the universe.* We may never grasp why hard times happen, but we need to grasp the truth that the same (loving!) God who controls the weather, day and night, planets and stars, and all living creatures, is also in control during hard times.

**GOAL:** (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

**INTRODUCTION:**

Tonight we will be discussing the question, "Where is God during hard times?" In the midst of suffering, it is easy to forget that the (loving!) God of the universe is still in control even when life seems to be spinning out of control.

**PRAYER:**

God, life is hard. When times are hard, it's difficult to understand why you would allow such things to happen. Help us learn to trust in your love and power.

**MEDIA/ACTIVITY/INTERACTION:**

Play video: Trailer for Bruce Almighty.  
([www.youtube.com/watch?v=iib9np8dm\\_o&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iib9np8dm_o&feature=related))

1. Have you ever thought life was unfair?
2. Have you ever complained about life?
3. What if you had the chance to be in control of the universe, how would you use the power?

**TRANSITION:**

When life gets hard, it sometimes feels like God isn't doing His job. We question God's whereabouts, His intentions and purpose. We might even think that we could do it better if given the opportunity. We're going to look at God's response to a suffering man who questioned God's control of his situation.

**SCRIPTURE:** (This is a lot of Scripture, but it will help us understand the way God shows His control through Job's life. Think of a creative way for your students to go through all of it!)

Read Job 1:13-19; 2:3-7

1. What was everything Job lost?

Read Job 30:25-31 (Job's confusion in the midst of his pain.)

2. Is Job's confusion and anger with God reasonable?

Read Job 38:1-41 (God's response)

3. Why do you think God's response is made up of a list of questions for Job?
4. What is God trying to communicate through His response?
5. What verse or verses seem to best illustrate God's control over the universe?

Read Job 40:4-5 & 42:1-2 (Job's responses back to God)

6. How does Job demonstrate that he understands the point God is trying to make?
7. What has Job learned? What have you learned?

Read Isaiah 55:8-9

8. Put these verses into your own words. What do they mean to you?

**TAKE AWAY:**

After this lesson, how might you respond differently to suffering and difficult times? How could you use the truths in this lesson to help someone who is going through a difficult time?

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

God, we praise You for your power over all things. Help us to be comforted during hard times, knowing that You are in control.

## **Hard Times & Pain: “Direction”**

Stacey Sutkowski’s Blog (some thoughts to help you lead this conversation with your students)

September 11, 2001 is a day that will be forever etched in the minds of anyone who was old enough to remember it. I was a senior at Bethel College. I remember watching CNN that morning in a state of shock. I stared at my TV screen, brushing my teeth, as the terrorist-highjacked airplane crashed into the second tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. At that moment, I didn’t know just how catastrophic or monumental the attack was for our country, but after hearing classmates talk about it during my 10am class, I started to understand and began to feel frightened.

We were all scared. Were the attacks over? How would this affect our economy and the stock market? Did this mean we were going to war? Would there be a draft? Would my friends head to fight in battles over sea? Are we in danger in Minnesota? Will I ever stop watching the news? When will things start to feel normal again? Or will they?

With a campus full of scared and worried college students, the leaders of Bethel quickly sprang into action. The big screen in our chapel showed continual live coverage of the day’s events by CNN. Campus pastors and professors made themselves available to talk or pray with students. We all grieved the loss of lives and security in our own ways: some in groups, some alone, some through song, some through silence. In the following days, chapel services reminded us that our security comes from the Lord and we ought to fix our eyes on Him during such hard times. It seemed that message was national as churches around the country became crowded as more and more people cried out to God for help.

In Mark chapter 4, the disciples find themselves in a very scary situation. A major storm rises and threatens to steal their lives along with their fishing boat. Being fishermen, used dealing with storms at sea, I imagine they sprang into action once the waves around them started getting rough. They probably tried all their usual tricks for escaping a storm and scrambled to figure out how to get out of their predicament before waking Jesus up to ask, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” It took Jesus just three words to calm the waves and end the storm. Perhaps they should have thought about asking Him for help from the very beginning!

So, what are we supposed to do during life’s storms? I think a typical “churchy” answer is to fix our eyes on Jesus, or to simply “go to Jesus”. While I don’t disagree at all with such answers, I am not sure they are enough. Through this lesson, it’s my prayer that students will understand what it means to “fix our eyes on Jesus” on a practical level, as well as know of some other things they can do to when faced with hard times. I’ve included some information on stages of grief that may be a useful supplement to the lesson. As always, remember to tailor this study, and information about practical ways to handle grief, to their needs.

**GOAL:** (everyone's will be a little different, write yours here to remind you of what you are leading your group toward)

**INTRODUCTION:**

Tonight we will be discussing what to do during hard times.

**PRAYER:**

God, when life gets hard, it seems easy to feel scared, angry, or worried. Teach us how to have faith and trust you through life's storms.

**MEDIA/ACTIVITY/INTERACTION:**

Listen to the song, or watch a youtube video of Casting Crown's "Praise You in This Storm".

1. What does this song say about who God is during life's storms?
2. What does this song say about how to respond to difficult times?
3. What can we praise God for when times are tough?

**TRANSITION:**

It's hard to see God's love during hard times. It's easy to wonder why God would allow such things if He truly loved us. Next, we're going to look at one man's suffering and how he was able to hold on to the truth of God's love through his pain.

**SCRIPTURE:**

Read Mark 4:35-40

1. (v35) Who suggested this particular boat ride?
2. (v37) For the disciples it was a storm at sea, what unexpected events in your life have scared you?
3. (v38) What is Jesus doing during the storm? Why do you think it was possible for him to be asleep?
4. (v39) How does Jesus demonstrate His control over the storm?
5. (v40) Why does Jesus ask this question? Do you think the disciples still "have no faith"?
6. How does faith come into play during hard times?
7. The disciples went to Jesus when they were scared. In what ways can you go to Jesus during hard times?
8. Did Jesus know about the storm before it happened? Do you think it was helpful for the disciples to go through it together? Do you ever feel like no one else understands your difficult situation? (Drive home the point that God means for us to go through life together with other people, through the calm and the storm.)

Read Hebrews 12:2-3

9. What does it mean to fix our eyes on Jesus? Did the disciples do that?
10. According to verse 3, why should we not grow weary and lose heart?

**TAKE AWAY:**

People deal with life's storms in different ways, but resting in God's love and power through the storm is the first step for Christ followers. If you are going through a hard time, focus on God's faithfulness and look to the people God has surrounded you with for support.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

God thanks for being with us in the storm. Help us to fix our eyes on your promises and trust in your amazing love and power!

## Coping with Grief and Loss

Losing someone or something you love is very painful. After a significant loss, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as shock, anger, and guilt. Sometimes it may feel like the sadness will never let up. While these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming, they are normal reactions to loss. Accepting them as part of the grieving process and allowing yourself to feel what you feel is necessary for healing.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve — but there are healthy ways to cope with the pain. Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing that eventually can strengthen and enrich life.

### What is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. You may associate grief with the death of a loved one – and this type of loss does often cause the most intense grief. But any loss can cause grief, including:

- A relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- A miscarriage
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- A loved one's serious illness
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of safety after a trauma

The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief. However, even subtle losses can lead to grief. For example, you might experience grief after moving away from home, graduating from college, changing jobs, selling your family home, or retiring from a career you loved.

### Everyone grieves differently

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried – and **there is no "normal" timetable for grieving**. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

## Myths and Facts About Grief

**MYTH: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.**

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

**MYTH: It's important to be "be strong" in the face of loss.**

**Fact:** Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely are normal reactions to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

### Are there stages of grief?

In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what became known as the "five stages of grief." These stages of grief were based on her studies of the feelings of patients facing terminal illness, but many people have generalized them to other types of negative life changes and losses, such as the death of a loved one or a break-up.

### The five stages of grief:

- **Denial:** "This can't be happening to me."
- **Anger:** "Why is this happening? Who is to blame?"
- **Bargaining:** "Make this not happen, and in return I will \_\_\_\_."
- **Depression:** "I'm too sad to do anything."
- **Acceptance:** "I'm at peace with what happened."

Not everyone who is grieving goes through all of these stages – and that's okay. Contrary to popular belief, **you do not have to go through each stage in order to heal.** In fact, some people resolve their grief without going through *any* of these stages. And if you do go through these stages of grief, you probably won't experience them in a neat, sequential order. The grieving process is typically like a roller coaster, full of ups and downs, highs and lows. So don't worry about what you "should" be feeling or which stage you're supposed to be in.

### **Coping with grief and loss: Tip 1: Get support**

The single most important factor in healing from loss is having the support of other people. Even if you aren't comfortable talking about your feelings under normal circumstances, it's important to express them when you're grieving. Sharing your loss makes the burden of grief easier to carry. Wherever the support comes from, accept it and **do not grieve alone**. Connecting to others will help you heal.

- **Turn to friends and family members** – Now is the time to lean on the people who care about you, even if you take pride in being strong and self-sufficient. Draw loved ones close, rather than avoiding them, and accept the assistance that's offered. Oftentimes, people want to help but don't know how, so tell them what you need – whether it's a shoulder to cry on or help with funeral arrangements.
- **Draw comfort from your faith** – If you follow a religious tradition, embrace the comfort its mourning rituals can provide. Spiritual activities that are meaningful to you – such as praying, meditating, or going to church – can offer solace. If you're questioning your faith in the wake of the loss, talk to a clergy member or others in your religious community.
- **Join a support group** – Grief can feel very lonely, even when you have loved ones around. Sharing your sorrow with others who have experienced similar losses can help. To find a bereavement support group in your area, contact local hospitals, hospices, funeral homes, and counseling centers.
- **Talk to a therapist or grief counselor** – If your grief feels like too much to bear, call a mental health professional with experience in grief counseling. An experienced therapist can help you work through intense emotions and overcome obstacles to your grieving.

### **Coping with grief and loss: Tip 2: Take care of yourself**

When you're grieving, it's more important than ever to take care of yourself. The stress of a major loss can quickly deplete your energy and emotional reserves. Looking after your physical and emotional needs will help you get through this difficult time.

- **Face your feelings.** You can try to suppress your grief, but you can't avoid it forever. In order to heal, you have to acknowledge the pain. Trying to avoid feelings of sadness and loss only prolongs the grieving process. Unresolved grief can also lead to complications such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and health problems.
- **Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way.** Write about your loss in a journal. If you've lost a loved one, write a letter saying the things you never got to say; make a scrapbook or photo album celebrating the person's life; or get involved in a cause or organization that was important to him or her.

- **Look after your physical health.** The mind and body are connected. When you feel good physically, you'll also feel better emotionally. Combat stress and fatigue by getting enough sleep, eating right, and exercising. Don't use alcohol or drugs to numb the pain of grief or lift your mood artificially.
- **Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, and don't tell yourself how to feel either.** Your grief is your own, and no one else can tell you when it's time to "move on" or "get over it." Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment or judgment. It's okay to be angry, to yell at the heavens, to cry or not to cry. It's also okay to laugh, to find moments of joy, and to let go when you're ready.
- **Plan ahead for grief "triggers".** Anniversaries, holidays, and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings. Be prepared for an emotional wallop, and know that it's completely normal. If you're sharing a holiday or lifecycle event with other relatives, talk to them ahead of time about their expectations and agree on strategies to honor the person you loved.

### **When grief doesn't go away**

It's normal to feel sad, numb, or angry following a loss. But as time passes, these emotions should become less intense as you accept the loss and start to move forward. If you aren't feeling better over time, or your grief is getting worse, it may be a sign that your grief has developed into a more serious problem, such as complicated grief or major depression.

### **The difference between grief and depression**

Distinguishing between grief and clinical depression isn't always easy, since they share many symptoms. However, there are ways to tell the difference. Remember, grief is a roller coaster. It involves a wide variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even when you're in the middle of the grieving process, you will have moments of pleasure or happiness. With depression, on the other hand, the feelings of emptiness and despair are constant.

Other symptoms that suggest depression, not just grief:

- Intense, pervasive sense of guilt.
- Thoughts of suicide or a preoccupation with dying.
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Slow speech and body movements
- Inability to function at work, home, and/or school.
- Seeing or hearing things that aren't there.