
Guilt, Grief, Anger & Ambiguity

— Supporting Families Through The —
Emotions of a CMV Diagnosis

Stephanie Lucas, Licensed Marriage And Family Therapist
Hands and Voices Parent Guide

A Bit of Our Story

- Practicing Family Therapist for

10 years, certified in EMDR

Specialize in anxiety, trauma,
communication & teenagers

Hands & Voices Parent Guide in
Oregon

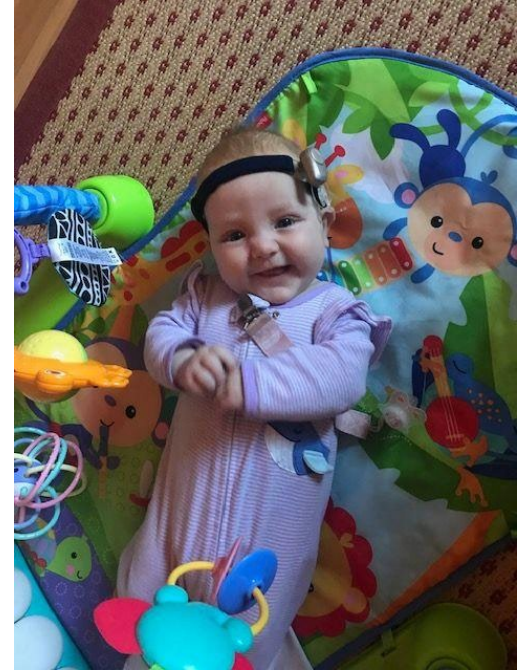
Addie, 7, Riley, 4, Grant

Contracted CMV @ 39weeks

Diagnosed at 2mo, SSD



Our Diagnosis Experience



Traditional Grief:

- There's expectancy
- There's a timeline
- There are rituals

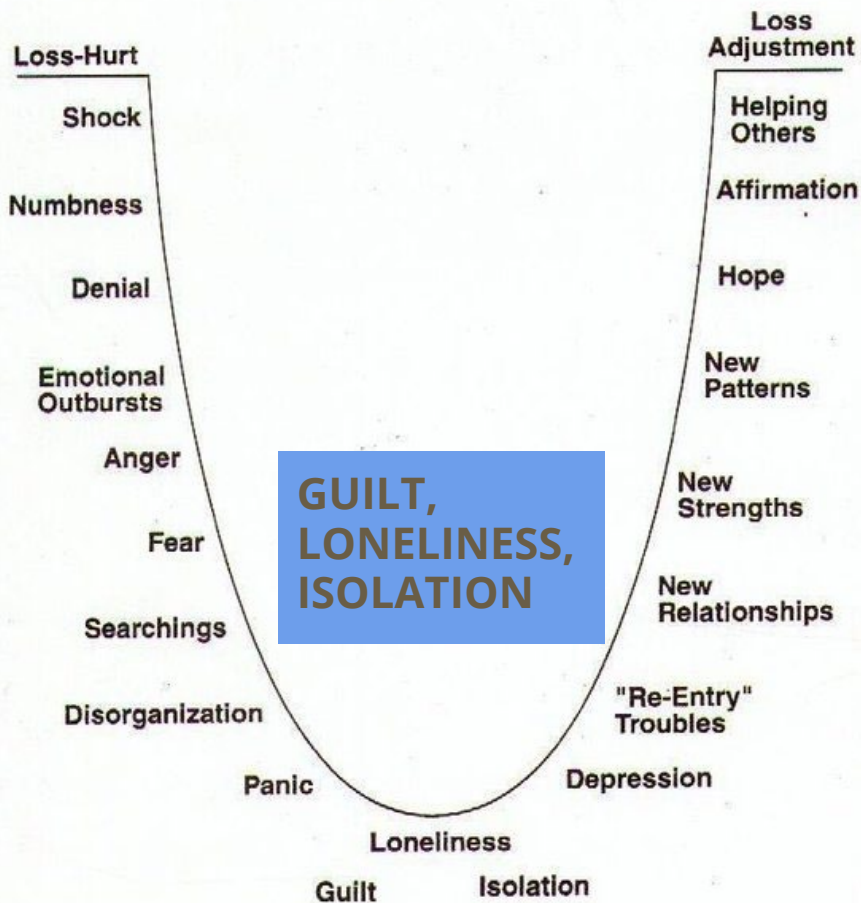


Complex Grief:

- Asking Why
- Out of Control
- Isolated from Community

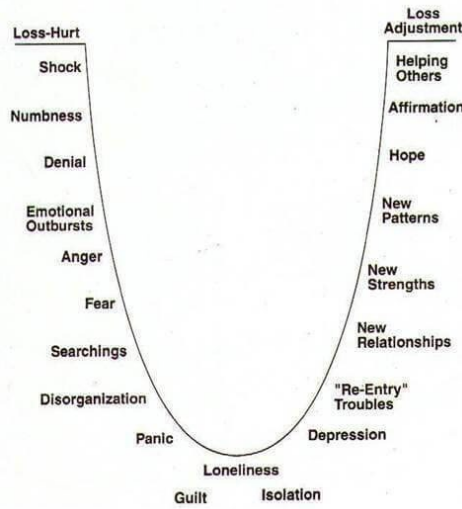
STAGES OF GRIEF

LOSS/HURT
SHOCK
NUMBNESS
OUTBURSTS
ANGER
FEAR
SEARCHING
DISORGANIZATION
PANIC
GUILT

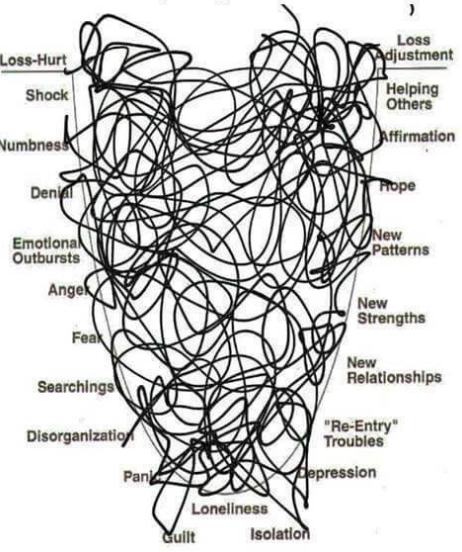


ADJUSTMENT
HELPING OTHERS
AFFIRMATION
HOPE
NEW PATTERNS
NEW STRENGTHS
NEW RELATIONSHIPS
"RE ENTRY" TROUBLES
DEPRESSION

STAGES OF GRIEF



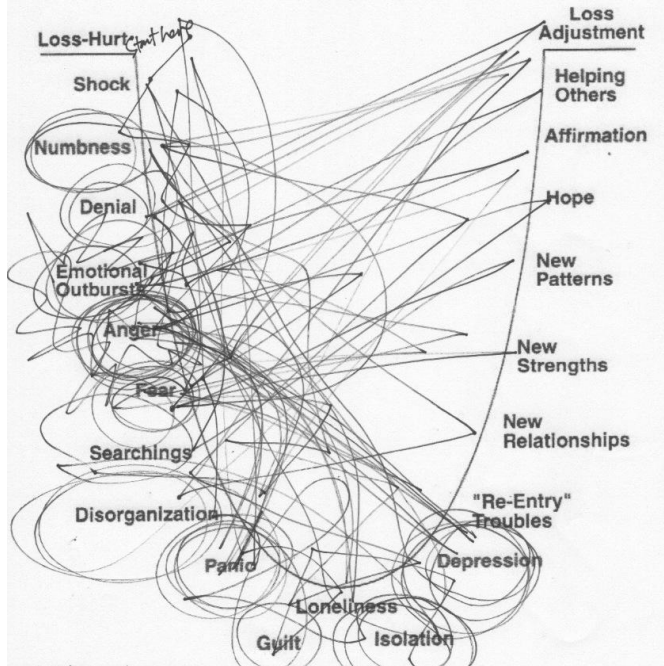
My experience



The Mess

STAGES OF GRIEF

there really are no "stages" to follow in order.



Additions + drawings or scribbles by Beth Erlander on 7-9-15

A little of our own chaos...



What makes it trauma?

- Feeling unsafe, physically or emotionally
- Feeling out of control
- Shame or brokenness
- Responsibility - I did something wrong

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Signs of Traumatic Grief

- Stuckness, flashbacks, nightmares, intrusive thoughts
- Intense attempts to control environment
- Deep avoidance, shame
- Defensiveness, anger and blame

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How might a CMV family present?

- Overwhelmed by guilt or blame
- Struggling to tolerate the Ambiguity
- Hyper fixated on outcomes, worst case

Scenario, Anticipatory Grief

- Dissociated, barely functioning

When we can't process our feelings we...

Fight

Flight

Freeze



What happens for the helpers?

- **Responsibility**
- **Power and Control**

- **Shame / Competency**

- **Safety, physical and emotional**





Positive Cognitions/Mantras For Ourselves

- ❑ I have space for this. (SAFETY)
- ❑ My greatest power is my presence. (POWER, RESPONSIBILITY)
- ❑ It's ok to not have all the answers. I can say I don't know with confidence. (COMPETENCY)
- ❑ I have time. (SAFETY, COMPETENCY)



Positive Cognitions/Mantras For Families

- It's normal to feel this way. I get it.
- I'm here for you. We are on a team.
- There are a lot of unanswered questions. We'll tackle them one at a time.
- This will take time.
- I honestly believe you have done the best you could until this point, and will continue to do so as we move forward.



Other Helpful Tools for processing emotions...

Totems



Touchpoints



And create meaning!

- Podcast
- Instagram
- Speaking Engagements
- Hands and Voices



Other parents...

- Political advocacy
- Volunteer organizations or a career pivot
- Publish books
- Lead fundraisers



What is the “it factor” when it comes to resilience?

Find Your Community!



When it's all said and done...

The only cure for grief is prevention.

Thank you!

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