



To: **Subject Advisors**

Topic: **Coping with grief and loss**

Message Objective(s): Assisting people to cope with grief and loss.

Message: As the NECT family we lost one of our own this past week, the very man responsible for writing the care and support messages over the last year. Mr Japhta Mametja passed on early Sunday morning of the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 after battling cancer for a very short time. His sudden departure has left his family and work colleagues hurting. We are profoundly saddened by his untimely passing on and extend our deepest sympathies to his family at this difficult time. The NECT cherishes his contribution to the organization and the wider education community in South Africa. MHSRP.

As I take over writing the care and support message, I found it fitting to write about grief and loss to assist us to deal with our loss. What is grief? It is our response to the loss of a loved one. It is the emotional suffering one feels when they lose a loved one. Often the pain of loss is overwhelming. We may experience all kinds difficult and unexpected emotions ranging from shock, anger to disbelief, guilty and profound sadness. The pain of grief can disrupt our physical and mental health. All these are normal reactions to loss -and the more significant the loss, the more intense one's grief will be.

One of life's biggest challenges is coping with the loss of someone you love. Loss is personal so we need not be ashamed of our feelings about how we deal with it. People deal with loss in many ways, but it is important to go through the five stages of grief in order to completely deal with our losses.

In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a psychiatrist described the 5 stages of grief as following.

1. **Denial**- Failing to come to terms with the loss of a loved one. In this stage we cannot accept reality that a loved one is no more. This helps us to minimise the overwhelming pain of loss. As we process the reality of our loss, we are also trying to survive emotional pain.
2. **Anger**- "Why me?" we ask. We find it easy to find someone to blame and anger allows one an emotional outlet, but it may push away those that want to comfort the bereaved.
3. **Bargaining**-Guilt sets in as the bereaved become desperate and are willing to do anything to avoid the current pain. The plea is directed to a higher being.
4. **Depression**-Bereaved are vulnerable in this stage. They are too sad to do anything. They have feelings of helplessness. Reality sets in but they still struggle to come to terms with it.
5. **Acceptance**-Being at peace with the loss. No longer resisting the reality of the loss.

While grieving, we may experience all these stages or some of them. The five stages are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. "Our grieving is as individual as our lives," according to Kubler-Ross.

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