



**Medical  
Blueprints**

## **THE SIXTH STAGE OF GRIEF: FINDING MEANING REPORT #2728**

---

**BACKGROUND:** Grief is the process an individual goes through after losing a significant person or element from their life. It's usually associated with the loss of human life, however, that is not the only cause. Any significant loss can be emotionally difficult and disruptive for an individual and can also cause complicated grief in some people. Complicated grief affects between 10% to 20% of grievers. For an adult with complicated grief, emotions become overwhelming and they struggle with daily functioning. These individuals need additional guidance and support to process their loss. Older adults experience grief at a higher rate than younger adults or children due to spousal loss, as well as death of friends, siblings and cousins. About 2.5 million people die in the U.S. annually, each leaving an average of five grieving people behind. Childhood grief is often a memorable experience, commonly marked by the death of a grandparent or older relative. Bereavement during childhood can cause issues such as bedwetting, digestive problems and trouble sleeping. It's estimated that 5% of children in the U.S. have lost one or both parents by age 15.

(Source: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/grief/related/grief-statistics/#gref>)

**GRIEF TRENDS AND TREATMENT:** New technologies are the current trends in grief counseling as each person handles grief differently. Generational differences, social media and the severity of grief all affect how the experience is handled. Millennials have grown up with increased divorce rates, frequent job changes and constantly changing technology. For this reason, its possible millennials can adapt more easily to loss and manage grief more effectively. Facebook, Twitter and other social media outlets allow a grieving person to connect with others easily and quickly. While most people usually show symptoms for a month or two, some can develop complicated grief. When this occurs, treatment providers can offer additional support and guidance. Studies show that grief treatments that resemble trauma therapy seem to promote a 25% better response rate than typical interpersonal therapy.

(Source: <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/mental-health/grief/related/grief-statistics/#gref>)

**GROUNDBREAKING STUDY:** Research shows that a structured psychotherapy developed by Dr. M. Katherine Shear, the Marion E. Kenworthy Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University's School of Social Work and Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, is the most effective way to treat those who are suffering from the condition known as complicated grief. Results showed antidepressant medication makes a difference only for relief of co-occurring symptoms of depression. Dr. Shear developed a 16-session complicated grief treatment (CGT) to help those suffering from complicated grief accept the finality of their loss and rebuild their lives. This study showed a very strong effect of CGT, with a response rate of 83%. Study findings did not show a difference between antidepressant and placebo when administered with or without CGT. "Physicians and other direct care professionals can improve the care of patients with complicated grief if they know how to recognize this condition and how it is different from depression. Complicated grief is a serious, prevalent, and frequently chronic and debilitating condition that needs to be recognized and treated," said Dr. Shear.

(Source: <https://socialwork.columbia.edu/news/groundbreaking-study-confirms-that-complicated-grief-is-not-depression-thus-requires-targeted-therapy/>)

✉ **For More Information, Contact:**

Karen Millsap  
[hello@karenmillsap.com](mailto:hello@karenmillsap.com)

Noelle Moore  
[noelle.moore@thefinleyproject.org](mailto:noelle.moore@thefinleyproject.org)

**Free weekly e-mail on Medical Breakthroughs from Ivanhoe. To sign up: <http://www.ivanhoe.com/ftk>**