

Coping with Loss

A GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH AT SEA



MENTAL HEALTH
SUPPORT SOLUTIONS



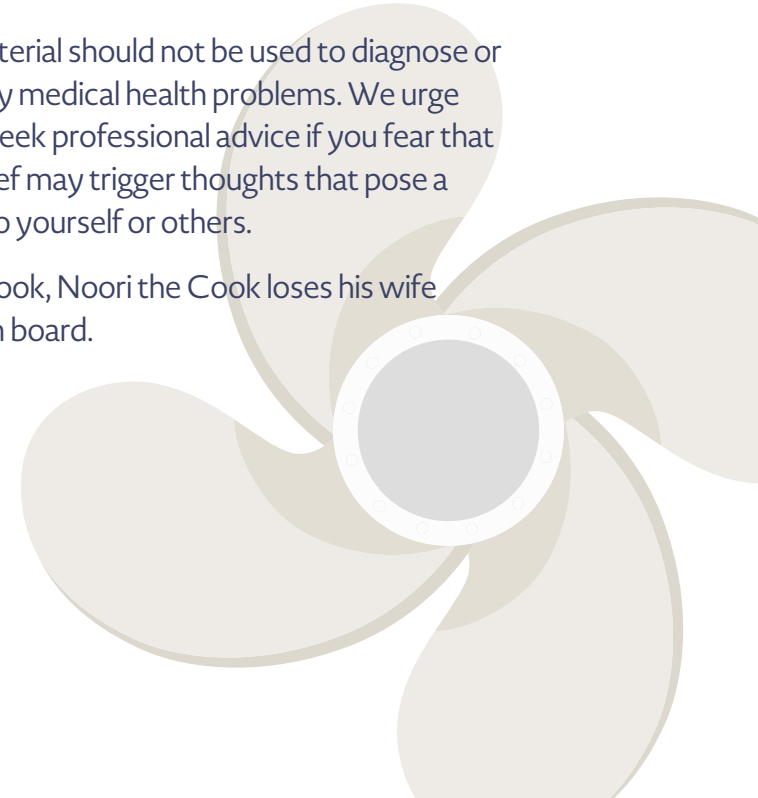
Steamship
Mutual

Grief with current depressive episode

The content in this book is offered solely for educational and informational purposes and is not intended to be medical advice.

This material should not be used to diagnose or treat any medical health problems. We urge you to seek professional advice if you fear that your grief may trigger thoughts that pose a threat to yourself or others.

In this book, Noori the Cook loses his wife while on board.





Filipo - The Captain

- He is Filipino, living in Bacolod
- 52 years old
- He has a wife, 3 kids and 2 dogs
- He likes to listen to rock music
- He loves to play chess and the guitar
- His favorite food is Kaldereta



Ivan - The Chief Engineer

- He is Russian, living in Naples
- 46 years old
- He is a single father
- He has a 14 years old son
- He likes to sail
- He enjoys to repair old cars



Caven - The Electrician

- He is American, living in Hamburg
- 28 years old
- Newly married
- He is a cat-person
- He likes to build 3D puzzles
- He is a huge bicycle fan



Athena - The Chief Officer

- She is Greek, living in Crete
- 43 years old
- She is a single mother of 2 kids
- Her son is about to start college
- She likes meditation and yoga
- Her favorite food is Noori's mushroom soup



Noori - The Cook

- He is Indian, living in Delhi
- 44 years old
- His wife recently passed away
- He has a daughter and grandchildren
- His favorite dish is Biryani
- He is a fan of the Lord of the Rings



Ginto - The Able Bodied Seaman

- He is Filipino, living in Tandag
- 25 years old
- He has a wife and 2 kids
- He likes playing video games
- He loves bringing back refrigerator magnets from around the world
- He enjoys playing the saxophone



Indica - The Third Engineer

- She is Indian, living in Chicago
- 26 years old
- She is single
- She loves to watch basketball games
- Her favorite basketball player is Breanna Stewart
- She is a Motorbike fan

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Noori receives a phone call from his daughter saying that his wife had passed away.

Noori's wife was fighting cancer for a year, but nobody expected her death to come so soon. He is shocked and desperate to return home, yet the vessel will take another 6 days until they hit the next port.



Noori is angry with himself because he was not there when his beloved wife passed. He is feeling lost and guilty since he can't attend the funeral. He realizes that there are no more future plans with his wife which makes him feel lonely.



Noori isn't eating much, he is having difficulty breathing, and his heart is aching. He's been suffering from sleep deprivation and starts hearing his wife's voice during the night.



The captain goes to check on Noori. He explains how his mental and physical health has been poor. Noori is too ashamed to call his daughter and is afraid of her reaction.

The captain validates his feelings, and offers that a temporary cook could substitute for him. Also, the captain suggests contacting an Imam to help lead his prayers. Noori appreciates this idea.



Noori was afraid to call his daughter, but she is very happy that he reached out to her. She was hoping to talk to him about her mother to get some closure.



Meanwhile the captain is on a call with professional mental health providers to find the best way to help and prepare the arrangements for Noori to leave the vessel.



Following the advice of mental health professionals, some of the crew members approach Noori and offer to listen to his hardships. Noori feels supported and relieved to be able to go home to his daughter.



Noori was now able to say good-bye on his own terms. He is reliving memories of his wife together with his daughter.



Noori calls the support line of MHSS to talk with a clinical psychologist to process the grief. He then starts to help other seafarers who also experienced loss.

Noori still sails and, in addition to being a chef, has a new title: psychological first responder.



There are 5 stages to process grief. These stages represent our attempts to process change and protect ourselves while adjusting to a new reality. While there are parts that are common within each stage, the grieving process differs greatly between individuals. These stages don't represent the grieving process in its entirety but may reflect some aspects of grieving for some individuals.

1. Denial: can feel like shock, numbness, confusion.
2. Anger: can feel like frustration, impatience, resentment, rage, embarrassment.
3. Bargaining: can feel like guilt, shame, blame, anxiety, and insecurity.
4. Depression: can feel like sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, disappointment and overwhelming.
5. Acceptance: can feel like, "good enough", courageous, self-compassion, pride, validation.



Let's keep these stages in mind, but there is also another perspective of grieving.

Some people also think of the grieving process as a roller coaster, with ups and downs, highs, and lows. The ride, like many roller coasters, is harder in the beginning, with deeper and longer lows.

The unpleasant periods should get less severe and shorter as time passes but working over a loss takes time. Even years after a loss, we may still feel a tremendous feeling of loss, especially at important occasions such as a family wedding or the birth of a child.



How to take care of yourself while grieving?

1. You can try to suppress your grief, but you won't be able to do so constantly. To heal, you should first accept your grief. Trying to escape from pain and loss only prolongs the grieving process.

Acceptance doesn't mean not experiencing distress, emotions, or trauma or agreeing with what's going on. It includes recognizing what you are fighting against, confirming your desire to battle against it, and reorienting yourself to the reality of the present moment.



2. Turn to your crew, friends and family, this is the moment to lean onto others who care about you. Rather than avoiding them, connect to friends and loved ones, spend time together face to face, and accept any help that is offered.

People often want to assist but are unsure how, so tell them what you need—whether it's a shoulder to cry on, a listening ear, or simply someone to hang out with.



3. Maintain your interests and activities. Routine provides comfort and returning to things that give you joy can help in the grieving process.



4. Don't forget to express your feelings. Even if you are unable to discuss your loss with others, writing down your thoughts and feelings in a notebook might be beneficial. You might also express your feelings by drawing, creating a scrapbook or volunteering for a cause relevant to your loss.



5. Don't allow anyone to tell you how you should feel, and don't pressure yourself either. Your grief is yours alone, and no one can tell you when to 'move on' or 'get over it'.

Allow yourself to feel anything you want, without shame or criticism. It's fine to be angry, to scream into the sky, to cry or not to cry. It's also okay to laugh, find joy, and let go when the time comes.



6. Take care of your physical health. The mind and body are strongly connected. When you're physically well, you'll be able to manage emotions better.

Get enough sleep, eat well, and exercise to combat stress and fatigue. Don't use drinks or drugs to numb the pain of grief or to artificially improve your mood.

Always keep in mind

- ✿ Being aware of our breathing helps us stay focussed in the present moment.
- ✿ Staying connected to family and friends can really help us stay calm.
- ✿ Staying hydrated helps us focus and can prevent headaches.
- ✿ Make sure you know the dangers of alcohol abuse.
- ✿ Your mind and body work together to form a strong team.
- ✿ Worrying can be ended by taking action or letting the thoughts go.
- ✿ Social activities help us stay connected with our colleagues.
- ✿ Find time for stillness, meditation, praying or simply quiet time.

- ✿ Talking about our emotions helps our body and mind deal with them.
- ✿ Don't distract yourself with your mobile when working. Stay safe.
- ✿ Monitor your screen time and limit your surfing on the web.
- ✿ Sleep is the foundation of resilience and mental health.
- ✿ When we share our issues or help others, hormones decrease our stress levels.
- ✿ Help colleagues in need and watch out for sad or anxious behaviour.
- ✿ We all go through hard times. It is part of the shared human experience.
- ✿ Try to be as understanding as you can about people's problems and listen to them without judgment.



The bravest thing you can
do is ask for help!



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Contact us today to find out how we can help and
support you, your colleagues and your organisation.

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