



# RECOVERING FROM DIVORCE

Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors

# OBJECTIVES

- Definitions
- Stages of Grief/Loss
- Physical Reactions
- Ways to Cope
- Children and Divorce



# DIVORCES...

“Divorces are often the result of problems that can occur when you separate couples on multiple occasions for long periods of time.”



- Gene-Thomas Gomulka, *Deployment and Divorce*



# LOSS

Loss not only includes the death of a loved one, but also the loss of a spouse through divorce or separation. It may also include separation from a job or retirement from the military.

Loss can be cumulative.



# GRIEF

- Grief is the inner experience of someone who has experienced a loss
- It may include emotions, thoughts and behavioral symptoms
- Symptoms of grief are considered normal following a loss, but can also be considered abnormal when these symptoms persist for long periods of time



# JUST LIKE OTHER LIFE LOSSES AND CRISIS...

...divorce is a major loss and needs to be grieved.

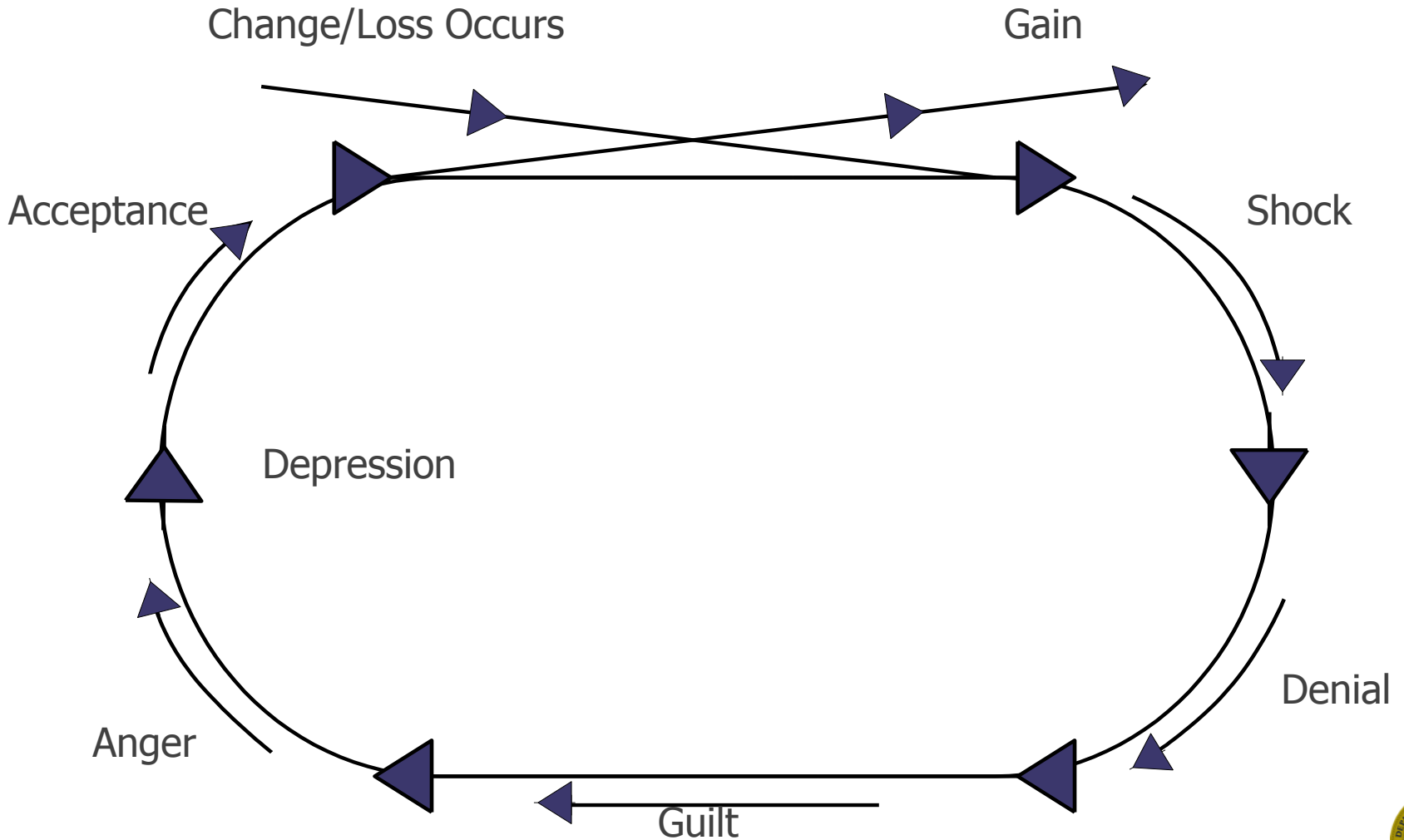


# STAGES OF GRIEF & LOSS

- Shock
- Denial
- Guilt
- Anger
- Sadness/helplessness
- Acceptance



# GRIEF/LOSS CYCLE





# COMMON FEELINGS ASSOCIATED WITH DIVORCE

- Numbness: the sense that none of this is real
- Expecting your “ex” to come back
- Sense of anger and/or injustice
- Feelings of emptiness, loneliness, or despair
- Lack of focus or trouble concentrating



# POSSIBLE PHYSICAL REACTIONS

- Weight loss or gain
- Headaches
- High blood pressure
- Upset stomach or digestive problems
- Fatigue
- Problems sleeping



# COPING TIPS

- Allow yourself time to grieve
- Think about what helped with other losses
- Let friends and family know how they can help
- Take care of yourself
- Look for healthy ways to express your feelings



# COPING TIPS

- Follow your own emotional timetable
- Join a support group for divorced people
- Make major changes slowly
  - Talk!



# TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THE DIVORCE

- Share what you feel comfortable sharing and nothing more
- Be careful about what you say about your “ex”
- Find a way to express difficult feelings privately



# TIPS FOR TALKING ABOUT THE DIVORCE

- Don't ask friends to give you reports on the activities of your "ex" or to carry messages
- Avoid making your divorce the focus of every conversation
- Talk with trusted friends or relatives who have been through it



# CHILDREN AND DIVORCE

- Jointly tell them about your decision to separate/divorce
- Don't substitute gifts for time and attention
- Refrain from using your children as messengers between parents
- Support relationships with both extended families



# CHILDREN AND DIVORCE

- Allow your child to communicate openly
- Offer your child choices when possible to increase their sense of power over their lives
- Find additional help for your child if needed





# DO'S & DON'TS

- Don't argue with your spouse in front of the children
- Don't discuss your spouse's negative behavior with your children
- Have polite interactions with your spouse in front of your children
- Choose to focus on the strengths of all family members



# IF IT'S MORE THAN NORMAL GRIEF

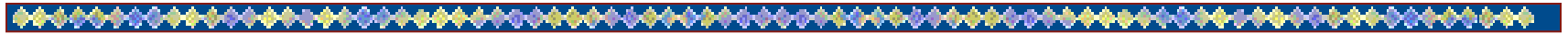
If you believe that your grief is adversely affecting your life and activities, you may need to seek outside help from:

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Behavioral Health Services



# COPING WITH THE LOSS OR GRIEF...

...that often follow a divorce or separation can be one of the hardest things you'll ever do.



But if you allow yourself to grieve and learn ways to cope during this difficult period, you can begin to move forward.





**QUESTIONS?**



# RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE [www.Tricare.mil](http://www.Tricare.mil)
- Behavioral Health Services



# REFERENCES

- <https://www.militaryonesource.com/>
- <http://www.military.com/>
- Elisabeth Kuebler Ross, MD, *On Death and Dying*
- Gene-Thomas Gomulka, *Deployment and Divorce*
- Scott Lorenz, *Long Distance Relationships Suffer During Troop Deployment*
- [www.helpguide.org](http://www.helpguide.org)



# RECOMMENDED READING

- *Between Love and Hate: A Guide to Civilized Divorce*, by Lois Gold (Plume, 1996).
- *Child-Friendly Divorce: A Divorce(d) Therapist's Guide to Helping Your Children Thrive*, by Diane M. Berry (Blue Waters, 2004).



# RECOMMENDED READING

- *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Surviving Divorce; Third Edition*, by Pamela Weintraub and Terry Hillman (Penguin, 2005).
- *Crazy Time: Surviving Divorce and Building a New Life; Revised Edition*, by Abigail Trafford. (Harper Paperbacks, 1992). ISBN: 0060923091







**THANK YOU**

