

# Living Through Loss Counselling Society of BC

#201 – 1847 West Broadway Vancouver, BC V6J 1Y6

Fax: 604-873-5002 PHONE: 604-873-5013

Email: [ltlc@sprint.ca](mailto:ltlc@sprint.ca) Web Site: [www.ltlc.bc.ca](http://www.ltlc.bc.ca)

## DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

### Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Community

Disenfranchised grief cannot be openly acknowledged, cannot be publicly expressed and is often not socially sanctioned. Secrecy, shame and guilt often are part of the grieving process for a member of the LGBT community.

The inability to do the work of grieving and mourning tends to have a cumulative effect for which various negative coping devices may be devised, i.e., drugs and alcohol. Also, living in a constant state of suppression of feelings often leads to depressive symptoms, which in turn serves to increase the sense of isolation and alienation already present.

Self-care and self-acknowledgement are crucial to healthy grieving. If you are a disenfranchised griever:

- Know that, despite other people's discomfort with or belittling of your loss, you have every right to grieve and mourn.
- Validate the relationship you had with the person who died
- Know that your experience of loss and your feelings are valid.
- Break the silence! Talk to someone you trust who will not judge you. Depending upon the circumstances, this may or may not be someone in your immediate circle.
- Find a counsellor or therapist. He or she can help you deal with the impact of your loss and assist you in completing the tasks of mourning.
- Formalize your loss experience by creating rituals that are meaningful for you and honour your need to say goodbye and provide a release of feelings.
- Acknowledge your pain, think about what happened, write about it or talk about it. Allow your tears to flow. Crying is not a sign of weakness.
- Know that you are not alone – many people experience disenfranchised grief.
- Create a self-care/stress reduction program. Find things you enjoy doing and do them!

While there are unique and personal aspects to every loss, it is necessary to remember that all pain hurts, and that everyone who grieves deserves comfort. When the fear, isolation and sense of alienation that underpin disenfranchised grief are eradicated, there is freedom to heal.