

# Top Ten Touchstones: Traumatic Loss

1. Grief is sad; **trauma is devastating.**
2. Trauma is an **event** that is abnormal; you may feel like you are “going crazy”.
3. **Common normal responses to trauma** include:
  - startle response
  - flashbacks
  - hyper vigilance
  - anxiety
  - hyperfocus on the event of death or the last hour of life
  - obsessive thoughts
  - replaying the story in your head repeatedly with "if only's"
  - sense of disbelief lasting from weeks to months or longer
  - feeling of unreality — “this is something that happens to others or that you read about in the paper”.
4. Grief is a heart wound, while trauma is a soul wound. **If there was no time to say goodbye, this will complicate your grief journey.**
5. Grief is often anticipated; **trauma is often sudden and unexpected.**
6. Grief comes to all; **trauma often has injustice as a component.** Some losses are “forever losses” so “getting over it” is never the goal. Learning new and healthy ways to live **with** traumatic loss is the goal. And very, very hard work.
7. Grief is an injury. **Trauma is a critical injury.** People with a broken leg reach out and seek professional help to get well again. People with a broken heart are wise to do the same by seeking help following traumatic loss.
8. **Grief comes and goes. Trauma comes and stays.** If you find yourself thinking about your loved one 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it is a good idea to seek professional help to guide you through this time of crisis.
9. When you have had a traumatic loss, broaden your base of support - it will lessen your load. Grief shared is grief diminished. **Shock accompanies trauma and serves a necessary function of delaying grief by numbing feelings.**
10. Trauma always involves grief. Grief does not always involve trauma. **Trauma both precedes and delays the experience of grief. As the shock recedes, the grief proceeds.** This is a critical time for people to be supportive. It can be months after the traumatic event, and the need for support can last years.

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