

Ambiguous Loss

Perceiving Ambiguous Loss: “The loss is confusing; people are baffled and immobilized. They don’t know how to make sense of the situation.”

“The uncertainty prevents people from adjusting to the ambiguity of their loss by reorganizing the roles and rules of their relationship with the loved one, so that the couple or family relationship freezes in place.”

“People are denied the symbolic rituals that ordinarily support a clear loss – such as funeral after death in the family.”

Kinds of Ambiguous Loss:

“**Physically absent by psychologically present**, because it is unclear whether they are dead or alive.” Example, missing in action or kidnapping victim.

“**Physically present but psychologically absent**. This condition is illustrated in the extreme by people with Alzheimer’s disease, addictions, and other chronic mental illnesses.”

By Pauline Boss, *Ambiguous Loss – Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*, pages 7-8.

Storytelling in a small group or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next prompt and so forth. A person can pass.

1. **Tell a story about an “Ambiguous Loss” you have had or someone you know has had.** (“The loss is confusing; people are baffled and immobilized. They don’t know how to make sense of the situation.”)
2. **Share about a family or friend who has/had Alzheimer’s disease, addictions, and other chronic mental illnesses.**
3. **Share any insights or emotions you had as you talked about your (or others) ambiguous loss(es).**

Check out and download at <https://lifesjourney.us/storytelling-about-grief-and-loss-menu/>

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