

The Emotional Roller Coaster of Grandparenting from a Distance

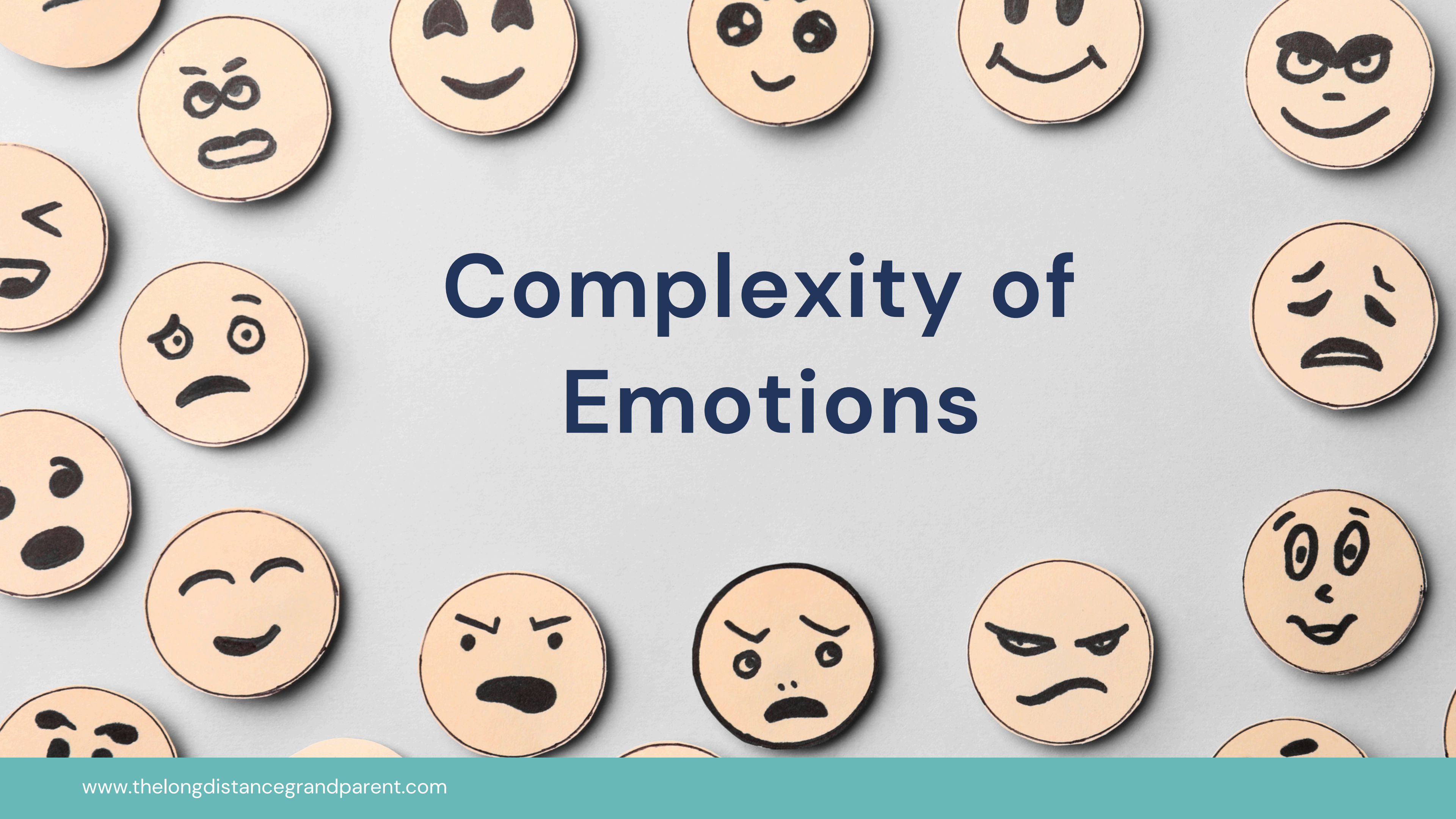
By: Kerry Byrne, PhD



WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT TODAY?

- Complexity of Emotions
- How other long distance grandparents feel
- LDG Grief and Key Features
- Moving from what can't to what can be possible
- Menu of coping concepts and strategies
- Q & A



The background of the slide is a light gray surface covered with numerous circular, hand-drawn cards. Each card features a simple face with black ink drawings for eyes, eyebrows, and a mouth, representing a wide range of human emotions. Some faces are smiling, some are crying, some are angry, and some are surprised. The cards are scattered across the slide, with some partially visible at the edges.

Complexity of Emotions



Comfortable Emotions

Joy	Excitement
Gratitude	Fulfillment
Pride	Amusement
Love	Playfulness
Hope	Resilience
Belonging	Curiosity
Contentment	Satisfaction



Uncomfortable Emotions

Loneliness	Frustration
Anxiety	Bitterness
Fear	Worry
Guilt	Irritation
Disappointment	Isolation
Resentment	Longing
Jealousy	Ambivalence
Hopelessness	Confusion
Inadequacy	Perplexity
Powerlessness	

What emotions are coming up for me about my grandparenting situation?

IN THEIR WORDS...

*I think my biggest challenge **remains the sadness and grief** that has occurred since they moved away. Not only do I miss my grandchildren and the future I thought I had with them but I also intensely miss my son and daughter. Right or wrong, at times I feel angry and have some abandonment issues. I am a therapist by training and understand all of this clinically but privately it is **so difficult**. I enjoyed reading your article about the grief that is associated with being a long distance grandparent. It articulated how I have been feeling. I have not seen this type of info before. So thank you for writing it.*



Kerry Byrne, PhD
@thelongdistancegrandparent

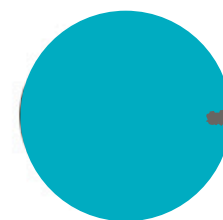


Long distance grandparenting is a bittersweet dance between love and longing—cherishing what we have while grieving what we're missing.

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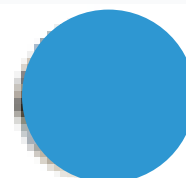
d... 15w

My daughter, her husband and my precious grandson moved 1100 miles away a year ago. I haven't been the same since. I feel empty, worthless, sad and hopeless. No one talks about this kind of pain.



Comments

...



m... 15w

It's hard to put into words how your heart and your empty arms ache. I live in Australia and three of my grandsons live in Norway. I miss them terribly.



GRIEF RESEARCH

Ambiguous Loss

Anticipatory Grief

Disenfranchised Grief



LDG GRIEF

A complex emotional experience characterized by a **deep longing** for proximity and connection. It's not about the finality of loss through death but about the persistent ache of missing everyday moments, milestones, and the intimacy of in-person interactions that often define close family relationships. This grief **coexists with the challenge of nurturing meaningful relationships** despite the physical gap.

**WHILE GEOGRAPHIC DISTANCE IS AT THE ROOT - THERE
IS SO MUCH MORE TO IT!**

KEY FEATURES OF LDG GRIEF



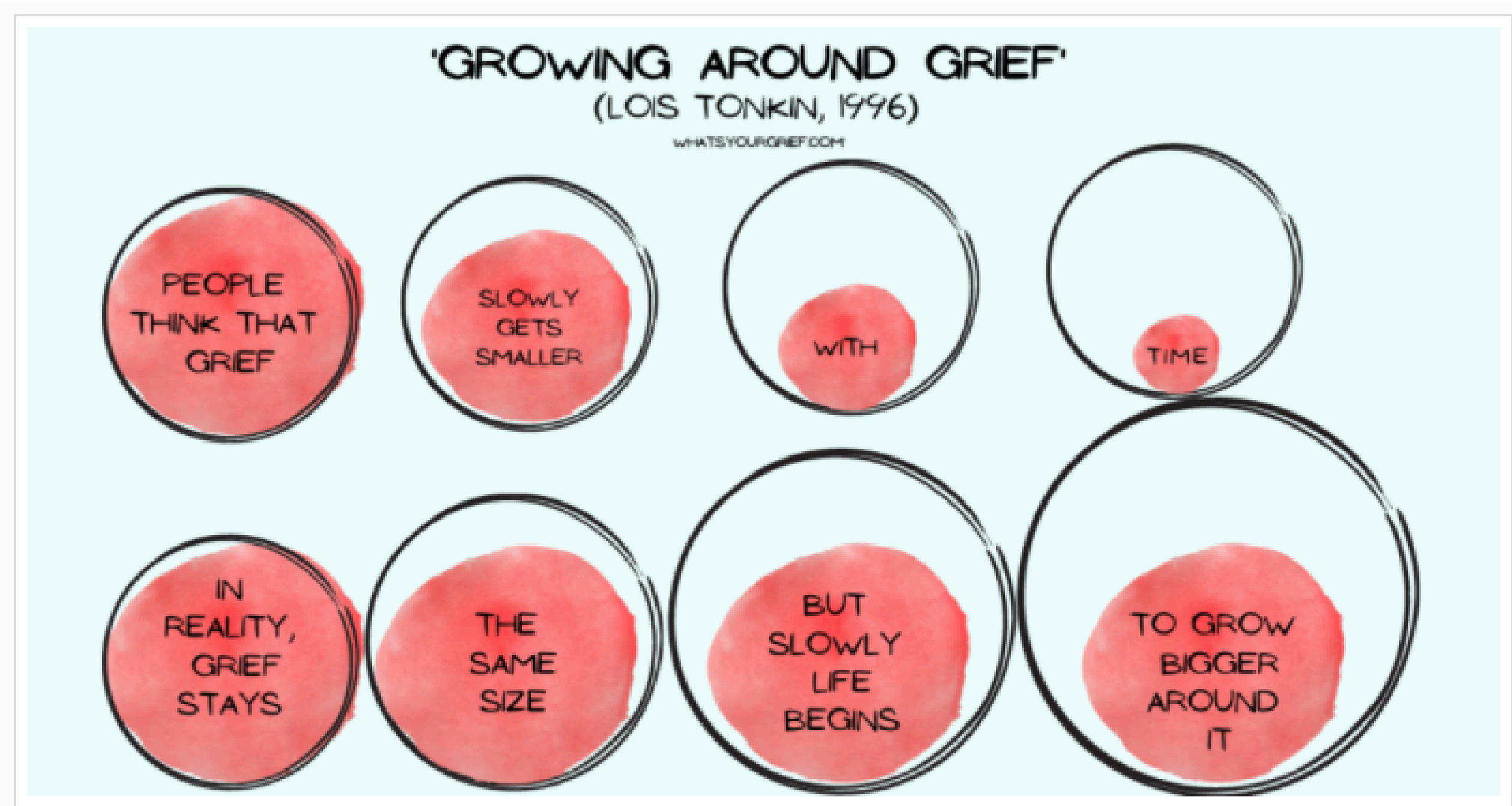
*My 4 daughters were so close to their grandparents growing up(who lived in the same town). I worked very hard for them to be very connected to them and I just **assumed someday the roles would reverse**. Three of mine moved away. **Ripped my heart out**. Last year we traveled 9 trips to be connected to the grands. I am worn out from back and forth travel. Once the grands are older and busy **I fear becoming an afterthought**.*

MENU

COPING CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

**Learn to cope with the grief - it can't be 'fixed'.
Coping helps ensure it doesn't hurt the potential for
relationships.**

GROW AROUND YOUR GRIEF



BOTH/AND THINKING

Your current thinking



Both/And Thinking



I will never be the grandparent I imagined
AND I'm still capable of figuring out how to
have a meaningful relationship with them.

It takes effort to think in this way.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICES

“*I think that journaling can lead you back from a really sad or negative focus.*

I can start writing about how frustrated I feel. But then that can lead into that intentionality and trying to keep being positive. And when I say keep being positive, I don't mean in that kind of Pollyanna kind of way, but in an intentional kind of way.

Journaling



AFFIRMATIONS

Most effective when:

- repeated daily and personalized to
- resonate with your individual experiences and emotions.

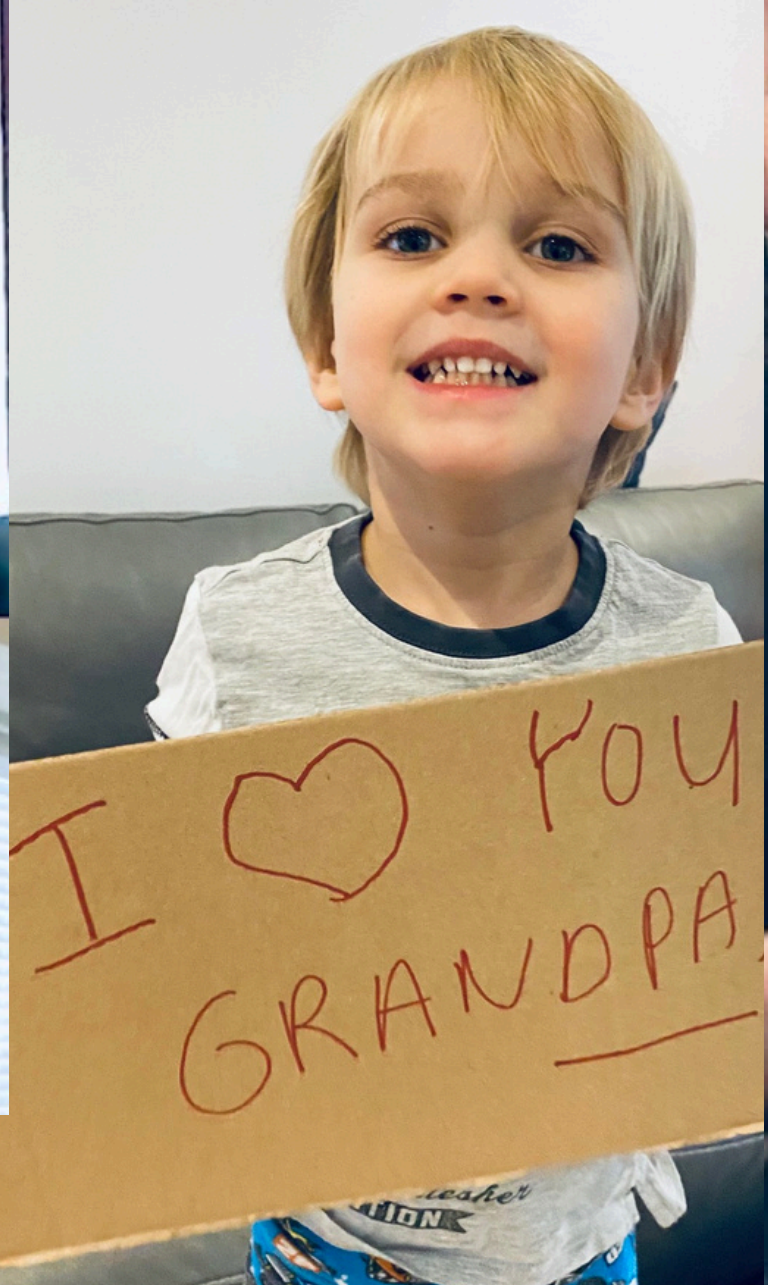


CLOSING THE GAP

How might you imagine something new? And I'm not talking about pretending. I'm not talking about happy talking yourself. I'm talking about thinking of, can you hold this paradox that your grandchild is both with you and not with you. They're physically absent, psychologically present. How do you figure out how to live into a relationship that is at a distance?

Dr. Carla Dahl

(long distance grandmother and grief expert)



Memory work and reminiscence therapy

Revisiting and reflecting on
positive memories

DATE

OUR GRAND MOMENTS

NAME MY AGE YOUR AGE



BY:

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INTENTIONAL CONNECTION



HELPING GRANDCHILDREN WITH EMOTIONS



COPING WITH GRIEF

KEY FEATURES OF L

Intensity and Fluctua

The intensity of LDG Grief can fluctuate around visits, holidays, and frequently intensifies at specific moments in the relationship—particularly around in-anniversaries of a loved one's death, I surge post-visit and sometimes even ends, as the anticipation of the upo begins to set in.

This pattern also applies to grandpa are **becoming** long distance grandpa grapple with the approaching move. types of grief, LDG Grief can come in sometimes as a dull ache, other times with intense emotions. These feelings unexpectedly, like a gut punch, espe grandparents who were once local a emotional and logistical challenges.

Many grandparents are caught off guard these emotions can be—resentment, —as they adjust to the new reality of relationships.



"My daughter & grand's live in NZ. I was so blessed to be there for my heart torn out. I miss them so New Zealand, with fantastic app

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COPING CONCEPTS &

Now that we've explored the definition of LDG the stories and experiences of long distance how to actually cope with the grief. In the fo grief experts that I've adapted to the experi are concepts and strategies that grief exper I've worked with over the last several years!



Nothing eliminates grief, but there are different ways to think about it.

Coping with grief of any kind is a process.

Think of the following strategies as tools. Start with the one that resonates most with you.

Some days it feels heavier than others.

- My goal in sharing these ideas is to offer a knowing that not every approach will work for you. If you explore different options, you'll find something that resonates with you.
- Some of these concepts are deeply rooted in grief theory. I'm only scratching the surface here, but I'm interested in exploring any of them more deeply.
- My hope is that these ideas give you a place to start with coping with LDG Grief.

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COPING WITH THE GRIEF OF GRANDPARENTING FROM A DISTANCE



A Resource Guide

Helpful Tools & Practical Strategies

By: Kerry Byrne, PhD

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PARENT GRIEF

Feel a lot of grief.



on (ages 6 and older). She was ecstatic the day her first grandchild was grandchildren arrived. Jane held out hope ways envisioned having grandkids running at games and practices.

their lives and jobs, all far from her, she led it the death of a dream.

...wasn't even really hope that we would ourselves so much here. And I think I ... And so to move somewhere and hope onship, maybe we would have. Maybe we here, it feels to me like a death. But no in't a real death.

miss their grandchildren do so because While this might play into it for some, the in have a vibrant life and lots of activities ned relationships. Jane explained this:

...ther, we run a not for profit and we're d yes, these things fill our lives but all of randkids close.

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QUALITY GAP

ce grandparents grapple with is ou imagined grandparenting in your life. This gap is often air grief, feeling unable to move an the reality of their situation.



ome a barrier to embracing long ggle to connect because they can't fferent from what they envisioned. titute or that your importance is

me your vision of what kind of ly focusing on what has been lost, connect—through video chats, enting may not look the way you

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THE **ONLY** GRIEF GUIDE IN THE WORLD CREATED FOR LONG DISTANCE GRANDPARENTS