



## Grief and Ambiguous Loss

Coping with grief and loss following brain injury is an ongoing journey. When a loved one survives an incident resulting in brain injury, there will be an adjustment period as family and friends get used to the new normal. Grieving who the person used to be can be confusing, as the injured person can be physically present but psychologically absent. Ambiguous loss occurs when there is no resolution for grief (Boss, 1999; 2006).

It is important to acknowledge ambiguous loss and seek support for the entire family unit, as this will allow families to focus on strengths and find meaning in their new realities.

Grief is an ongoing process in which people may move forwards, backwards or miss different stages. Models developed for family therapists for ambiguous loss can be helpful guidelines for families and carers, and involves:

- Looking at your circumstances through a variety of lenses and perspectives and search for meaning. Recognising positives and viewing hardships as a part of life can be helpful.

- Accepting that family relationships are not perfect. Learning to accept the 'new person' and adjust to the fact that the 'old person' and 'old family' may not return.
- Recognising and accepting changes within the family structure.
- Remembering that feeling ambivalent or neutral is normal.
- Letting go of expecting closure.
- Discovering hope in progress made, and achievements so far. This can help set goals for the future.