



# Ambiguous Loss

Parkinson's

Living with or caring for someone with Parkinson's disease can cause stress or overwhelm and can trigger a unique kind of grief.

This occurs when the person is psychologically present but has physically changed or declined from their past condition.

## Ambiguous Loss Defined

- A loss that is unclear
- Has no resolution
- Has no predictable ending or closure

Dr. Pauline Boss writes, "When a loved one is lost only partially, the ambiguity coupled with the loss creates a powerful barrier to both coping and grieving... When you are living with an illness or condition that has no cure, hope lies in your perception and ability to change. Therein lies a (person or) caregiver's window for hope."

## Tips for Managing

- Make a conscious decision to be okay with unanswered questions or problems that cannot be fixed as they are out of your control.
- As your relationship becomes more one-sided, connect with others that can be fully present.
- Acknowledge your sadness as it comes and grieve along the way.
- Feeling fear, anger and guilt are normal. Do not keep these feelings to yourself. Share them with supportive friends, a support group or healthcare professionals.
- Ask for and accept help. Let others help support you. Create a psychological family of people you can depend on.
- Remind yourself that you are doing the best that you can.
- Try to live in this moment, but allow yourself to hope and dream for a future of possibilities.
- Your role as a person or caregiver continues to change as the disease progresses. Give yourself permission to take care of YOU.

For further exploration & reflection read:

- Boss, P. (2000). Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Boss, P. (2001). Loving Someone Who Has Dementia. How to Find Hope While Coping With Stress and Grief, San Francisco, AZ: Jossey- Bass.