

## Understanding Traumatic Grief: Why Some Losses Require More Than Time to Heal

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**Cherish Mental Health Counseling LLC**, a trauma-informed therapy practice, is bringing awareness to the critical differences between standard grief and traumatic grief—and why specialized, trauma-focused care is essential for recovery.

## The Difference Between Grief and Traumatic Grief

Grief following a natural or anticipated loss, while deeply painful, often allows space for gradual emotional processing, meaning-making, and integration over time.

Traumatic grief, however, occurs when a loss is sudden, violent, unexpected, or emotionally overwhelming. In these cases, the nervous system may become stuck in a state of shock or survival, making it difficult for individuals to fully process the loss.

“Traumatic grief is not just about missing someone—it’s about the body and mind struggling to make sense of what happened,” says **Cherish Smith, LMHC**. “Without addressing the trauma component, individuals may feel stuck, overwhelmed, or unable to move forward in their healing.”

## Why Trauma-Focused Processing Matters

Traditional grief support may not fully address the impact of trauma stored in the body and nervous system. Trauma-focused approaches help individuals:

- Safely process distressing memories related to the loss
- Regulate overwhelming emotional and physiological responses
- Reintegrate the experience in a way that feels tolerable and meaningful
- Reduce symptoms such as intrusive thoughts, avoidance, or emotional numbness

As a **Certified Accelerated Resolution Therapist specializing in art therapy and trauma-informed care**, Cherish Smith integrates mind-body approaches to support clients in processing experiences that may feel “stuck,” especially in cases of traumatic grief.

“Approaches like Accelerated Resolution Therapy can help the brain and body reprocess distressing images and sensations in a way that feels safer and more manageable,” Smith explains.

## What No One Tells Us About Grief

Despite how common grief is, many are unprepared for its realities. Grief can be:

- **Isolating** — even when surrounded by others
- Marked by **secondary losses** (identity, routines, relationships)
- **Unpredictable**, with waves of pain that come unexpectedly
- **Exhausting**, both emotionally and physically
- Filled with **many different emotions in a single day**
- Longer-lasting than most people anticipate
- **Profoundly life-changing**, reshaping how we see ourselves and the world
- Accompanied by “**grief brain**,” including forgetfulness and difficulty concentrating

- Associated with **irritability or reduced patience**
- Linked to **physical symptoms** such as fatigue, aches, or sleep disruption
- **Disorienting**, making it hard to feel grounded or like oneself
- Ultimately, **transformative**, even when that transformation is painful

## Redefining Healing

Healing from grief—especially traumatic grief—is not about “moving on,” but about learning how to *move forward* as one carries the loss while reconnecting with life in a meaningful way.

Through trauma-informed care, expressive therapies, and evidence-based approaches like Accelerated Resolution Therapy, **Cherish Mental Health Counseling LLC** aims to support individuals in processing both the emotional and physiological impact of loss.

By increasing awareness and access to specialized care, the practice hopes to normalize the complexity of grief and offer a path forward that honors both pain and resilience.

## About Cherish Mental Health Counseling LLC

**Cherish Mental Health Counseling LLC** is a trauma-informed therapy practice based in Tampa, Florida. Founded by **Cherish Smith, LMHC**, the practice specializes in anxiety, trauma, and complex grief. Using approaches such as Accelerated Resolution Therapy and art therapy, services are designed to help individuals process difficult experiences, regulate their nervous systems, and reconnect with themselves in meaningful ways.

## Media Contact

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