Clients who are grieving after a significant loss sometimes ask me if they might be depressed. It can be difficult to distinguish between what would be considered “normal” grieving and what would lean more towards a diagnosis of depression. The table below compares the two in a way that helps clarify the differences between them. If you or someone you love is struggling with a depth of grief that feels unmanageable and/or is significantly impacting the ability to function in everyday life, please consider seeking help from a registered counsellor or psychologist.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Normal Grief** | **Clinical Depression** |
| Responds to comfort and support | Does not respond to support |
| Often openly angry | Irritable and may complain but does not directly express anger |
| Relates depressed feelings to the loss he/she has experienced | Does not relate feelings to a particular life event |
| Can still experience moments of enjoyment in life | Exhibits an all pervading sense of doom |
| Exhibits feelings of sadness and emptiness | Projects a sense of hopelessness and chronic emptiness |
| May have occasional, passing physical complaints | Has chronic physical complaints |
| Expresses guilt over some specific aspect of the loss | Has generalized feelings of guilt |
| Has temporary impact upon self-esteem | Loss of self-esteem is of greater duration |
| Experiences ups and downs in emotion | Experiences feeling “flat” most of the time |

Table adapted from Murray, J. (2012). UQ Lecture.