

# Study: Overcoming the loss of a loved one

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Netherlands scientists have offered the first conceptualization of what's known as the Complicated Grief Syndrome.

CG is a debilitating clinical syndrome that can develop when a person is unable to cope with the death of a loved one.

The study, led by Paul Boelen, a psychotherapist and an assistant professor at Utrecht University, is the first that can be used as a framework for cognitive-behavioral treatment strategies.

CG is defined as a combination of separation distress and traumatic distress that causes persistent and significant problems in a person's functioning for at least six months following a death.

The authors explain that, at the core of CG, the loss is poorly integrated into memory. Patients often experience the separation as very distinct, significant, and emotional as if it was new. Many have the sense that the loved one is still alive and will soon return. They continue to engage in automatic responses aimed at restoring closeness to the deceased and withdraw from social and recreational activities.

This study appears in the current issue of the journal *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*.

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