



Ambiguous Loss

April 2022

Senior Management Services

Looking through a favorite resource book, I've been thinking about Pauline Boss's words in *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*. She says, "People experiencing ambiguous loss are filled with conflicting thoughts and feelings." This could honestly describe many of our loved ones who are aging. They go through so many losses in this season of life, and not all are recognized, causing many conflicting thoughts and feelings.

- Loss of driving
- Loss of a lifelong friend
- Loss of ability to care for him/herself
- Loss of energy
- Loss of physical ability
- Loss of mental capacity (dementia/Alzheimer's disease)
- Loss of independence
- Loss of parenting (now being parented by their children)
- Loss of partnership/friendship
- And so many more....

These are just a few examples of the many unacknowledged losses that can be heaped on our older loved ones. One of the ways we can help is to acknowledge these losses and the feelings that come with them. As these losses begin to pile up, it can make it difficult to move forward when they are not acknowledged. Boss says, "In order to heal from that last loss, you may have to revisit those that came before." Our older loved ones have had so many experiences and giving them the time needed to talk about these losses can be an important piece of our caregiving role. Life can be so busy for working caregivers as we manage employment and family life and all the other pieces. It could be helpful to have a counselor or friend visit your older loved one to support them in processing all the losses they can experience.

For additional information about Eldercare, please contact Quest EAP at 1-800-364-6352.