



THE  
GRIEF  
CENTRE

# Grief after loss



Grief is our reaction to loss. When we lose something that we are attached to, or love, the reaction we experience is what is known as grief. While we can talk about the reactions others may experience when they are grieving, in truth, it is a very personal and individual experience.

But...reading or hearing about what other people have found helpful in their grieving can give you some ideas about what might be helpful for you in your process.



Most importantly, we do know that there is no timetable on grief. With support, you will do it in your own time. You may not get over your grief, but in all likelihood, even though it may seem impossible to imagine in the beginning, you will grow around it.

Grief is the outcome of loving and losing someone in life. It is a common human experience.



When someone in your life dies, it can feel as if things will never be the same again. You may feel:

**scared**

**frightened      confused**

**shocked      numb      relieved**

**exhausted      abandoned      disbelieving**

**depressed      worried      lonely      guilty**

**irritable      vulnerable      devastated      tense**

**bewildered      stunned      tearful      hurt**

**panicky      angry      suicidal      alone**

**confused      frozen      empty**

**overwhelmed      nothing**

**out of control**

The emotions can be surprising, frightening and overwhelming and you may feel isolated...as if no one understands how you feel.

Your body may react in ways that it hasn't before, including:

**insomnia**  
**headaches**  
**weight loss**  
**loss of appetite**  
**lowered immunity**  
**aches and pains**  
**weight gain**  
**exhaustion**  
**shivering**  
**nausea**

You may think...

- if I ignore it, the pain will go away
- this can't be happening to me
- my life feels chaotic
- what's the point?
- how will I carry on?
- I must be strong
- what will happen in the future?

It may feel as if your thoughts are out of your control at times.



You may behave in ways that you don't recognise, including...

- Crying; sobbing; feeling as if you are losing control of your emotions
- Isolating yourself; withdrawing; avoiding others; not talking
- Not being able to concentrate; confused
- Panic attacks
- Sleeping a lot; struggling to get out of bed
- Angry; losing your temper easily; lashing out

You may be shocked by your emotions, your body's reactions, your thoughts, and your behaviours, especially if you have never experienced this before. This is all part of grief.



## THERE ARE A FEW THINGS THAT ARE KNOWN TO BE HELPFUL

- Support and understanding in your grief
- Ceremony or ritual around the death
- Information
- Privacy to grieve
- Opportunities to talk
- Opportunities to experience and share your emotions
- Access to, and support from professionals
- Time out from other expectations, such as work commitments
- TIME

It may help to...

- Seek support from family and friends. While some people may not be able to give you the support you need, there are always those who can and will
- Take time out from your regular routine such as your work; preferably as much time as you need
- Cry when you feel the need. Crying and expressing your emotions is healing. Sometimes you may want to do this in private and at other times you may want to have someone with you
- Remain aware of your breathing. Taking some deep breaths when you feel overwhelmed can be helpful
- Make sure you are trying to eat and sleep regularly
- Keep yourself hydrated with water or other non-alcoholic drinks. Alcohol is a depressant so it's best to avoid it at times like this
- Even though you may not feel like it initially, exercise does help. Walking around your garden, the block, the park, is a start. Find a friend to walk with you. Someone who is comfortable talking to you about your loss, the grief and the changes in your life
- Consider joining a support group. Spending time with people who have had a similar experience may mean that they have some sense of what you are experiencing





## SOME INFORMATION THAT MAY BE HELPFUL WHEN YOU ARE GRIEVING

- Grief is personal and individual.
- There is no timetable. Everyone grieves differently and in their own time. Your grief will take the time it takes. Be patient and kind to yourself.
- You may find yourself experiencing extremes of feelings, thoughts and behaviours that you haven't felt before.
- Your moods, thinking and behaviours may swing back and forth wildly, often described as like being on a roller coaster or caught in a huge wave.





Image courtesy of [www.teamfamilyonline.com](http://www.teamfamilyonline.com)

- Experiences and reactions like these are normal when grieving.
- Even though it may not feel like it at times, the grief process will unfold naturally. It's important to be patient with yourself.
- Seeking support is important. You don't have to struggle and grieve on your own.
- Try not to avoid your feelings. Letting them out, for example, crying, and talking to friends, family and experienced counsellors, can provide relief and help the grief process.
- Grief is part of life. We grow around it.

Grief is a natural response to loss and grieving takes time, patience and support.



The Grief Centre would like to recognise and thank Dr Fiona Pienaar, who has written the material for this booklet. Please acknowledge the source if you are quoting from this material in presentations or publications. For more information or assistance contact us at:

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