

What is Grief ?

Grief is the normal, healthy response to different types of loss. Such losses include not only the death of a loved one, but also the loss of health, the loss of a special relationship, and the changes that invariably take place as a result.

What is Grief work ?

Grief work is the healing process by which you will come to terms with your loss. You don't get over your grief - you adjust to it. You cannot avoid grief - you have to live through it and feel it. Grief work will enable you to resolve and integrate the loss into your life. Successful grief work will help you to enjoy the memories of your loved one without the pain.

How long does it take ?

The process of grief work is highly individual and depends on such things as the nature of the relationship, the circumstances surrounding the death, your emotional support system and your cultural and religious background. Most of the more intense symptoms of acute grief will lessen within six to twelve months, but you will experience fluctuating emotions that resemble a roller-coaster ride for a long time.

How will I feel ?

Almost any emotion can be part of grief. You may experience intense emotions such as anxiety and insecurity, anger, guilt, confusion, fear, depression, relief. Give yourself permission to grieve by

acknowledging and expressing all of the feelings you are having. Feelings aren't right or wrong - they just are. You may be surprised at how intensely you feel about everything and wonder if you are losing control. This is normal and the feelings will diminish over time. Healing is painful but you will feel better as you work through your grief.

Eventually, you will start to feel better in small ways. You will begin to reorganize your life without your loved one. It is normal to feel somewhat guilty at this time because you are becoming ready to move on with your life. This in no way diminishes your feelings for the person who has died. It just means that you are progressing in your grief work and are adjusting to your new life. Your feelings and memories for your loved one will always be a part of you.

Grief affects us mind-body-spirit. You may find that you have physical symptoms such as insomnia, lack of appetite, sensitivity to noise, aches and pains. If they persist, a medical checkup is advised.

Grief work takes much physical and emotional energy. You may feel fatigued and have a low energy level. Be good to yourself by getting adequate rest, eating balanced meals, doing some form of physical activity, and nurturing yourself.

During the first year following your loss, it is wise to avoid making hasty decisions. You will need the security of familiar surroundings at first. It is recommended that you avoid making major changes in your life during the first year.

Can family and friends help ?

Although everyone must do his or her own grief work, it is important to allow yourself to accept the help and comfort of others. Sharing your pain will help you to feel less alone. People often want to help, but don't know how. It may be necessary to tell them what you need. Seek out caring family and friends who will listen to you and encourage you to share your feelings without judgement.

For some people, faith is a major source of comfort. For others, it is difficult during this period of loss. It is natural to search for meaning to explain your loss and you may find that you are questioning your religious beliefs. It may be helpful to discuss your thoughts with a friend or clergy person.



What else might help ?

Some people find that talking about their loss with others who have experienced the same thing is helpful.

Journal writing is also encouraged - you will be amazed at the extent of the feelings you once felt when you read back over your entries. Writing a letter to your loved one may also be helpful. If you are feeling "trapped" in your grief, seek the help of a mental health consultant or clergyperson with knowledge of grief and loss issues.

Remember that grief is a process, not an event. As you work through your grief, you will find that with time your feelings do lessen in intensity and you are finally able to enjoy gentle memories of your loved one without the pain. When this occurs, you will know that you have grown through grief and have been able to successfully integrate your loss into your life.



Bereavement Support Groups

Our Bereavement Support Groups consist of 8 weekly meetings that are held concurrently. Although a theme is presented each week, meetings are loosely structured to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss their personal losses as well as related grief issues.

We offer afternoon and evening sessions which are free of charge.

There is also a "Follow-up Meeting" that is held monthly for participants who have taken the 8 week session.

For more information, please call
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Coping with Grief

