Grief Is a Natural Reaction to Loss

Grief is a healthy, human response to situations such as:

- Death of a loved one
- Separation or divorce
- Miscarriage
- Injury or disability
- The loss of a job, property or pet
- Children leaving home

Often, the greatest loss we experience is when a loved one dies. Grief is a painful experience, but the pain does subside.

Everyone experiences loss or change at some time in life.

Understanding grief can help you:

- Face the reality and deal with feelings of fear, loneliness, despair, and helplessness.
- Recover and grow to be a stronger person. Accepting your loss can help you live a happy, full life again.
- Grief is part of the healing process.
**Grieving people share certain feelings.**

**Shock and denial:** Your first reaction may be to deny your loss or to feel emotionally numb. Eventually, you’ll be able to face the reality of your loss.

**Anger:** Your loss may seem unfair. You may feel angry with yourself and others for not preventing the loss. But you can work through your anger.

**Guilt:** It’s not unusual to blame yourself for something you did or didn’t do prior to your loss. Remember, you are only human - there are events you just cannot control or undo.

**Depression:** You may feel drained and unable to perform even routine tasks. Eventually, you will become involved in life again.

**Loneliness:** Increased responsibilities and changes in your life can make you feel lonely and afraid. As you meet new challenges and develop new friendships, these feelings will fade.

**Hope:** You will reach a stage where you can focus on your future with hope. No matter how difficult life may get, you can pull through!

**Living with Loss**

**It’s important to take care of your emotional needs.**

**Express your feelings.** Holding painful feelings inside can create more problems.

**Accept help.** Friends and relatives can make difficult moments easier. For many people, participation in and support from their spiritual community can be a great comfort.

**Ask for help.** Relatives and friends want to help but often don’t know what to do. Professional help is available if feelings of despair and worthlessness persist.

**Be kind to yourself.** Some days will be more difficult than others, but you will recover. Avoid making any major decisions until you fully recover from your loss.

**Don’t ignore your physical needs either.**

**Get plenty of rest.** You’ll have more energy to handle problems and to get involved in activities.

**Stay healthy.** Eat a variety of foods, and exercise regularly (after consulting your healthcare provider). Avoid alcohol, tranquilizers and other potentially harmful substances.

**Be alert for problems.** These include headaches, nausea, dizziness, heartburn, shortness of breath, weight loss, difficulty sleeping, and lack of energy.

Contact your healthcare provider promptly for advice if you have any signs of health problems.

Contact Carebridge at **800.437.0911** or visit [www.myliferesource.com](http://www.myliferesource.com) for more information!
Set goals and work to reach them.
Start with short-term goals.
List some fairly short, quick activities, such as writing letter, visiting friends or preparing a favorite meal — set time limits for completing activities.
Recognize your progress. Give yourself a pat on the back for your hard effort.
Take things one day at a time. Then, develop long-range plans.
Write down goals you may have for the future - for example, getting a new job, taking a trip, continuing your education, or trying a new hobby.
Check your progress periodically. You can always reexamine your goals and adjust your plans.

Try new activities.
Join a club or organization. Being with people who have similar interests can be rewarding and fun.
Take a new course. Check on adult education and college programs in your area. Choose a subject or skill you've always wanted to explore Do some volunteer work. When you help others, you also help yourself.
Evaluate your career goals. You may find yourself thinking about making a career change. Give yourself time to explore new career interests.

Get professional help.
Counselors help people understand their feelings, create new goals and adjust to their loss. Types of counseling include:
Individual counseling: working one-on-one with a therapist.
Group therapy: members help each other by sharing experiences.
Family counseling: family members work through their grief together.

If you need help choosing a counselor, ask Carebridge for help or reach out to your friends, health-care provider, a religious leader, or social service organizations for advice.

Support groups can be beneficial.
Bereavement groups, which provide emotional and practical help for people coping with a death.
Parents Without Partners, which helps people who are separated, divorced or widowed.
Widowed Persons Service programs, which can be found by contacting the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).
Other groups that can offer support include local mental health centers, hospice programs, social service organizations, and local hospitals.

You Can Help a Grieving Person
Offer emotional support.
Be present if you can. Just being near can be a tremendous help. Don’t be afraid to give the person a hug or hold his or her hand. (If you can’t be there, write, phone, send flowers, etc., to show your concern.)

Be a good listener. A sympathetic listener can be a great comfort.
Encourage independence. A grieving person may need to be reminded that he or she can handle a new way of life.

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Be patient. It takes time to accept loss and deal with changes.

Provide practical assistance.

Help with chores. Relieve the person of some chores, such as grocery shopping, doing housework, etc.

Assist with cards and letters. Offer to help write thank-you notes and other correspondence.

Lend a hand with meals. Bring something to the person’s home or extend an invitation for dinner at your home.

Answer the telephone. Offer to screen phone calls and take messages. Remember recovery takes time. Continue your support for as long as it’s needed.

Some Myths about Grief

Myth: Tears are a sign of weakness.

Wrong. Tears are a natural way to release intense feelings. There is no shame in showing how you feel.

Myth: Children should be sheltered from grief.

Not true. Children need to grieve. Tell them about the loss in an honest, loving way.

Myth: It’s best to avoid discussing a loss with a grieving person.

False. Grieving people are grateful for friends who share memories and talk about the pain created by the loss.

Myth: An end to grief means an end to caring about a loved one.

Not at all. Love lasts beyond grief through a commitment to living life fully.

Loss and grief are a natural part of life.

- Learn more about grief
- Believe that you will adjust
- Give yourself time to accept your loss and grow
- Seek help when you need it
- You can live life to its fullest once again.

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