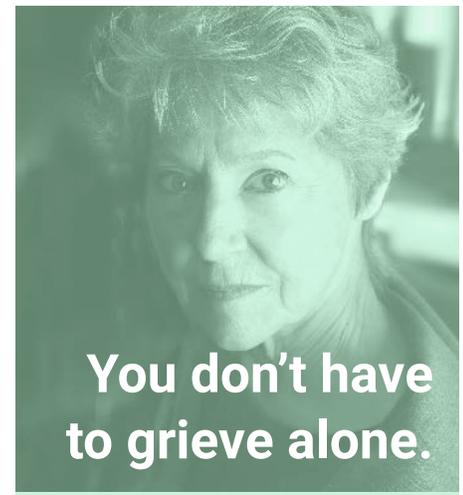


# Coping with Grief

Grief is a normal and natural response to a loss. Your grief is unique and everyone must grieve in their own way. Grief can be painful, long and unpredictable. It can cause you to feel anxious, confused, sad, overwhelmed and uncertain.

Although the passage of time can be helpful, it's what you do with the time that matters. Taking an active role in your healing process can be helpful.



## SELF-CARE AS YOU GRIEVE

- **Take care of your health.** Get adequate food and rest. Schedule a physical or other appointments you've postponed.
- **Talk about your loss.** You may need to retell the same stories as part of your healing. A support group may be helpful.
- **Make space for your loss.** Do you keep so busy that you don't allow yourself time to grieve? Respect your need for healing and accept opportunities to grieve.
- **Write about your loss.** Keeping a journal can be a powerful healing tool. Writing can help focus and identify emotions.
- **Cry if you need to.** Trust your body's need to cry or not to cry. When words fail, tears can help release pain.
- **Allow yourself hope.** Plan things to look forward to, like time with family and friends. Take a walk. Allow yourself to enjoy a moment.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Grieving is a process that takes time. There's no set timetable. It may be good to look back from time to time and see how far you've come.

## COPING WITH ANGER

Anger is a common response to grief. You may feel angry at being left behind, or at a higher power. You may be angry at others for perceived insensitivity. You may feel angry at the medical community for "failing."

Journaling about your thoughts and feelings may be a positive way to cope. You might find healing by channeling anger into volunteering or service. You may decrease your discomfort and promote healing by learning to recognize and deal with your anger.

## COPING WITH ANXIETY

Anxiety is common in grief. Some of the signs may include shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, trembling or shaking and dizziness. Other symptoms include a fear of going "crazy" or being out of control, and a feeling of detachment or being out of touch with your body.

It may be helpful to talk about your feelings and access support from family, friends or professionals.

It can be valuable to express emotions creatively. Try writing, painting or music. You may discover new coping strategies by reading about grief or anxiety. Take part in activities you enjoy. Find comfort in prayer or other spiritual practices. Monitor your diet, avoiding excessive caffeine and alcohol. Exercise can improve your mood.

## COPING WITH GUILT

You may feel guilt after the death of a loved one. Do you remember things you said or did that could have been hurtful, or things you wish you'd said or done?

Loss may bring up old issues, feelings, and conflicts from the past. Write a letter to your loved one. This can be a good tool for coping with guilt. Try to write a response letter (what your loved one might say to you).

Talk to a trusted friend or spiritual advisor. If you suppress or ignore guilt, it may intensify.

## COMMON REACTIONS TO GRIEF

### CHANGES IN MENTAL FUNCTIONING

- Inability to focus
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty processing information
- Disorganization
- Memory problems
- Preoccupation with the deceased
- Fear of “losing your mind”

### PHYSICAL RESPONSES

- Change in appetite
- Short of breath
- Deep sighing
- Tightness in throat
- Less resistance to illness
- Stomach problems
- Sleep disturbance
- Sensitivity to noise
- Headaches
- Weakness or fatigue
- Tight Muscles
- Trembling
- Dizziness

While these responses are not unusual, it's a good idea to consult your doctor if these symptoms are concerning.

### EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

- Numbness
- Anger
- Bitterness
- Feeling lost
- Anxiety
- Desire to run away
- Sadness
- Loneliness
- Emptiness
- Depression
- Relief
- Guilt
- Yearning
- Apathy
- Regret
- Confusion

## BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES

- Crying or sobbing
- Talking to the deceased
- Looking for your loved one
- Feeling the presence of the deceased
- Vivid dreams
- Restless over-activity
- Decrease in productivity
- Carrying objects/wearing clothing of deceased
- Difficulty with self-care
- Easily distracted

## SOCIAL RESPONSES

- Avoiding places where memories are strong
- Visiting places that hold memories
- Withdrawing from social activities
- Over-engaging socially
- Social discomfort
- Preoccupation with well-being of loved ones
- Avoiding friends/family

## SPIRITUAL RESPONSES

- Asking “Why?”
- Searching for purpose
- Loss of meaning



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