



# Bereavement



## What is grief

Grief is a strong, sometimes overwhelming emotion for people. It can cause you to feel like you are not coping and you can go through many stages of emotional responses to it. Grief is an important part of healing, some medications like tranquilisers can cause us to feel numb to our emotions and may not allow us to grieve properly.

Antidepressants may be helpful if depression following a bereavement is prolonged or severe.

## 7 stages of grief

### 1- Shock and disbelief

When you first find out about the death of a loved one, your initial reaction might be shock or complete disbelief. You're not quite in denial, you just can't even imagine what has just happened. This is a defense mechanism that is designed to protect from pain.

This stage can explain why we can plan a funeral or make other arrangements immediately after a death – you're in a state of suspension until you are able to grieve.

### 3- Guilt

Guilt can feel like a punch to the gut. It's completely normal to wonder what you could have done to prevent the loss from happening. While most of us will feel some sort of guilt when a loved one dies (thoughts such as, "I should have done more," "I should have called the doctor with my concerns" are common), around 7% of people will experience "complicated grief."

### 5- Depression, loneliness and reflection

Now that you have fully acknowledged the loss, it is common to experience depression and/or deep sadness. You may also feel lonely and isolated from other loved ones. This can be an especially poignant time to seek the help and guidance of a grief counsellor who can help you through the pain.

### 2- Denial

While denial shares similarities to disbelief, it is its own coping mechanism and also helps you to deal with grief and pain. You might simply deny that your loved one is gone, or push the thoughts out of your head. Some people can get stuck in a pathological and chronic state of denial and refuse to admit that anything bad has happened, but this is rare.

This phase takes form in different ways. Some people will deny they are grieving or affected by the loss whilst others will deny their loved one has gone.

### 4- Anger and bargaining

This stage usually occurs after the ceremonies and funerals. The comforting family and friends have left you, and you're trying to go about your life as usual. That's often when the anger comes in, and often bargaining as well. You might start to feel angry at the doctors, or another party, and perhaps even at the deceased themselves. This anger can often cause a person to feel even more guilt, but know that it is entirely normal, and provides a necessary emotional release.

### 6- Reconstruction, or 'working through'

By this time, you may still find yourself moving up and down the ladder, but are building a new life without your deceased loved one and living a 'new normal.' The hurt may feel raw and painful, you now know that you cannot change the situation. Though you may not be fully ready to accept the death, you know that life has to go on.

### 7- Acceptance

The final stage of this model is acceptance. You have worked through the most painful and difficult work of grieving, and you accept that your loved one is gone and that you need to continue living your life. You may begin to find joy again and smile rather than wince or cry when you think of your loved one. You may join new clubs, start a new hobby, take a trip, or clear out their possessions, keeping only the most important mementoes.

You may feel pressure to 'get over' your grief but everyone experiences different levels and patterns of grief

### Way to help deal with grief and self help

#### **Express what you need:**

Reach out to friends or family to let them know that you may be struggling and need their support

#### **Take care of yourself:**

Make sure you don't neglect yourself. Eat regular meals and drink plenty even though grief may make you feel sick and tired.

#### **Balance sleep:**

You may feel like you are losing sleep or having recurring dreams of those who have left us which may make it harder to sleep, others may not want to leave their bed and find themselves sleeping too much to escape the feelings of grief. Making sure we are practicing good sleep hygiene and getting out of bed can improve mood.

You may still have bad days and feel that the pain will never go away but accepting what has happened and being able to carry on with your life rather than being weighed down by many intense emotions and feelings. There is no right or wrong way to feel when you have experienced a bereavement.

### Ways to honour loved ones

#### **Keep objects to remind you of the person:**

You may want to wear an item that belonged to them such as jewellery or even wearing a scent that was familiar to them. You could make a memory box, filled with things that remind you of the person who has died, full of pictures, items they liked, tickets of places attended together.

#### **Keeping the conversation of a loved one going:**

it can feel uncomfortable to talk about your thoughts and feelings but sometimes it is better than suppressing them, it could benefit you if you don't want to talk to possibly write down how you feel instead.

#### **Do things on behalf of the person you've lost:**

For example, if there was somewhere they had always wanted to visit, you could go on their behalf. You could do some funding in honour of them or even raise awareness about any conditions they may have been diagnosed with.

## Helpful links

### **Mind Charity (Bereavement support groups)**

0151 512 2200

90 - 92 Chester St, Birkenhead CH41 5DL

[wirralmind.org.uk](http://wirralmind.org.uk)

### **Sue Ryder (Online bereavement support)**

[sueryder.org](http://sueryder.org)

### **Cruse Bereavement Support (Local counselling)**

0808 808 1677

[cruse.org.uk](http://cruse.org.uk)

### **Survivors Of Bereavement By Suicide (Peer led support)**

[uksobs.org](http://uksobs.org)

### **NHS (Guidance and support)**

[nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-bereavement-loss](https://nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/grief-bereavement-loss)

### **At A Loss (Signposting and information)**

[ataloss.org](http://ataloss.org)

bereavement signposting and information website.

### **The Good Greif Trust (Information and support)**

[thegoodgrieftrust.org](http://thegoodgrieftrust.org)

### **Bereavement Advice Centre (Advice)**

[bereavementadvice.org](http://bereavementadvice.org)

### **Liverpool Bereavement Service (Counselling for those struggling with loss)**

0151 236 3932

Granite Building, 6 Stanley St, Liverpool L1 6AF

[liverpoolbereavement.com](http://liverpoolbereavement.com)