

# GRIEF *Matters*

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*Compassionate support through the first year of grief*

## INITIAL LOSS

If you are reading this newsletter, someone important in your life may have recently died. We are so very sorry for your loss. This may be the first loss you've gone through, or you may already be familiar with the grieving process.

No matter what your past history is with grief and loss, it's important to know that you are starting a new, unique grief journey. Your relationship with the person, how the person died, the person you are today, your support systems, and how you cope with stress can all impact the way you grieve.

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the grief jo  
trying to come to terms with how much life is changing  
without the person.

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1 weeks of  
1 you're

**"When it feels as if nothing will ease your grief, hold on to the belief that every new sunrise brings you closer to comfort."**

*—Unknown*



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## What is grief?

Grief is a deep emotional response to loss, especially of someone or something important to you. There is a well-known—and mistaken—belief that grief happens in stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance). This idea can leave you feeling confused and frustrated if your experience is different.

While some people might move through grief in those stages, most people actually experience grief in a much more fluid way. Some have described their grief as:

- **Moving two steps forward and one step back**
- **Feelings that ebb and flow like waves on a shore**
- **A slow spiral, where you circle back to the same feelings again and again**

You might believe you aren't grieving "the right way" if you don't feel the same way other people do. **But there is no wrong or right way to grieve.** Your grief process will be unique and may not be anything like

what you—or others—expect. Even if you've grieved before, this loss might be totally different.

It might help to think of grief as a process, not an event. It will take time to heal and to find a new normal. Trust that you will get through this, one moment and one day at a time.

## Initial shock

In these early days after the loss, you might feel more shocked and numb than anything else. Shock is a very common emotion after a loss, even if the death was expected. In some cases, it can actually be useful.

Just like shock protects the body after a serious injury, feelings of shock after loss can help shield you emotionally in the first days. This can be helpful if you are responsible for time-sensitive tasks, such as planning funeral services, contacting family members, and getting other affairs in order.

## EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS OF EARLY GRIEF

The emotions of grief vary widely. Some common emotions during early grief are listed below. You may feel some, all, none, or other emotions entirely. Remember, there's no one right way to grieve, and all your feelings are valid.

### Sadness

Sadness can feel like a quiet ache at times, or other times like a crushing weight. It can leave you feeling physically and emotionally drained.

### Overwhelmed

It is completely normal to feel overwhelmed by your emotions and everyday tasks. Talking to a counselor, family member, or friend and reaching out to your support system can help when you're overwhelmed.

### Distracted

You may struggle with memory, focus, organization, decision-making, and daily tasks.

### Empty

You may feel nothing at all right now. Like shock, this may be your brain's way of protecting you. Work toward feeling your feelings at your own pace.

### Disbelief

You may feel like the death isn't real, even if you know logically it is. This new reality can take time to process, especially if the death was unexpected.

### Restless

You may feel as though you're in a dreamlike state and lose track of time. It can be difficult for you to fall or stay asleep, even if you are exhausted.

### Relieved

In some cases, especially after a prolonged illness or difficult relationship, you may feel a sense of relief. This can lead to complex emotions, including guilt.

### Anxious

You might feel anxiety over the future or how to cope without the person. There may be an increased sense of helplessness or fear of losing others.

**Note your symptoms in a journal, grief assessment, or simply reflect on them.** Acknowledging your emotions can help you process grief. Consider talking to a trusted care team member, friend, family member, or counselor.

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## Beginning your grief journey

Grief can be hard for anyone to process because it can also cause many physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, stomachaches, chest pain, and changes in sleeping and appetite. These symptoms of grief are not a sign of weakness or that something is wrong with you. They are very normal, natural signs that your mind and body are processing a loss.

**There is no quick fix for grief.** You will not just “snap out of it” and get over your loss, and no one should expect you to. This is the start of a journey

that can take many months or many years. Some people say you never really stop grieving. But it’s important to know that as you move through the grieving process, it will get easier over time.

One day, you’ll learn to live alongside grief. But for now, just focus on getting through the day. Below are tips that can help make the start of your grief journey a bit easier. **If your emotional or physical symptoms are too hard for you to handle, contact your doctor or our team for support.** Consider completing a grief assessment and sharing it with your care team so they can better understand your needs.

## TIPS FOR FRESH GRIEF

### Take one day at a time.

In the early days of grief, just getting through the day can feel overwhelming. It’s not just okay to take it one day at a time—it’s essential. Be easy on yourself if you are forgetful or unfocused. Set alarms for meals, medications, and appointments, or ask someone to check in on you. Each day you get through is an accomplishment.

### Accept that the loss is real.

Grief experts say the first “task” of grief is to accept the reality that the person is no longer physically here. Acknowledging your loss doesn’t mean you’re over it. It is recognizing the loss’s impact on your life. Let us know if you are struggling to acknowledge your loss.

### FEEL all of your feelings.

The best way to cope with grief is to name your emotions and allow yourself to *feel* them. Cry, scream, work out, or hit a pillow to help release intense feelings. Reach out for support if you are numbing your pain with alcohol, drugs, or risky behavior, which can delay healing.

### Rely on support networks.

In early grief, leaning on friends, family, or support groups can make a big difference. While it may feel easier to withdraw, staying connected helps you process your loss. Support networks can offer both emotional and practical help, which is crucial during this time.

**Simplify routines.** Give yourself permission to do less. If a task feels

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unpleasant, use disposable plates and cups for easier cleanup, have someone help with heavier chores, or reach out to your support network for help with daily tasks and meals.

**Notify your employer.** If you are working, review company policies, then ask your supervisor or HR if there are options like bereavement leave, remote work, or an adjusted schedule while you grieve.

**Be aware of depression.** You may feel like you don’t want to eat, sleep, work, or function. You may no

longer enjoy things you once did. **If you have thoughts of self-harm or feel like it would be better if you were dead, too, reach out to your doctor, counselor, or our care team immediately. Depression after loss is common and treatable. There is no shame in seeking help.**

**Get support for traumatic or disenfranchised grief.** If the person’s death was sudden, violent, or unexpected in any way, or if your loss isn’t widely acknowledged by others (e.g., pet loss, miscarriage, stigmatized loss), you may feel more intense grief symptoms. If you believe your loss was traumatic or disenfranchised, contact us so we can provide extra support.

**Practice self-care.** Grief is often all-consuming, so it’s easy to forget to take care of yourself. Self-care is not a luxury—it’s a necessity that helps ease difficult physical and emotional symptoms. Self-care in these early days of grief could be simplifying your daily routines, staying hydrated, resting whenever you can, or just letting yourself cry.

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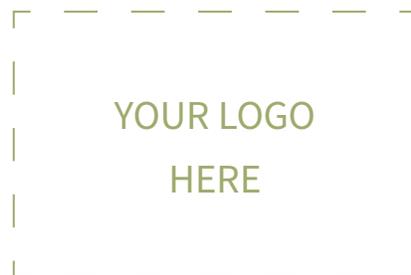
## We're here for you.

We provide grief support services to families up to 13 months after a loss, but you don't have to receive hospice services to receive grief support. Our programs are available to *all* members of our community. Contact us for more information.

1-800-123-4567 | [info@domain.com](mailto:info@domain.com)

## Your custom content here.

Add a message from administration or the bereavement team, upcoming events, support group schedules, photos, and more. Or submit artwork for the full back page ad: 8" x 10.5" print area. Graphic design services are available for \$60/hour.



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## ACKNOWLEDGING YOUR LOSS

Sharing your story of loss is a healthy way to process grief. Talking about your experience can help you reflect on your feelings, accept the reality of the loss, and begin your healing journey.

When you feel ready, answer the questions below. Skip any that don't apply. Write your answers in a journal, on your computer, or in your phone. Keep them for yourself or share with a friend, family member, counselor, or care team member.

1. What was the name of the person who died?
2. What was their relationship to you?
3. What was your relationship with the person like?
4. Were you with the person when they died, or how did you hear about their death?
5. What was your initial reaction to hearing about their death?
6. What are your strongest memories of the person?
7. Are there emotions you still experience? **Text area: 5.5x8.25"**
8. What physical symptoms did you experience when the person died or when you found out about the loss?
9. What has changed in your daily routine now that the person is no longer here?
10. What will you miss most about the person?
11. Is there anything about the person you won't miss?
12. Is there anything you regret doing or saying (or not doing or saying) before the person died? What would you tell the person now if they could hear you?

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Contact us with questions  
or for more support.

1-800-123-4567 | [info@domain.com](mailto:info@domain.com)

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## HELPING OTHERS HELP YOU

Below is a list to guide others in supporting you during early grief. Have a trusted person help you check what would help you, cross out what will not, and add your other needs in the blank spaces. Share this page with anyone who offers to help.

### Being present for someone who is grieving...

- Express sympathy.** *"I'm so sorry for your loss."* *"My heart goes out to you."*
- Acknowledge grief.** *"I can't imagine how hard this is."* *"Take as much time as you need."*
- Listen** without judging, interrupting, or giving advice.
- Share a story** or fond memory you have of the person who died.
- Keep in touch.** Check back in each week or month with a text, call, or visit.
- If you don't know what to say, just be there.** Sometimes your presence is enough.
- Other ways to be present:

### When offering to help...

- Be specific, instead of just asking how you can help.** Someone who is grieving may need help, but might not be able to tell you what they need. *"May I visit, or do you need time alone?"* *"Can I drop*

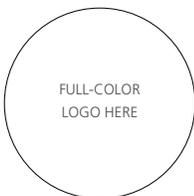
### Check to see if there are

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking or delivering                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking, grooming                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light housekeeping, dishes, laundry, etc. | <input type="checkbox"/> Errands, mail, groceries               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Light home repairs, lawn care, etc.       | <input type="checkbox"/> Memorial service or funeral planning   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Childcare or school pickups/drop-offs     | <input type="checkbox"/> Help with bills, insurance, legal docs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other ways to help:                       |   |

### Things to avoid...

- Minimizing or rushing grief.** *"They're in a better place."* *"You need to be strong."*
- Focusing on yourself.** *"I know how you feel."* *"When I lost [Name], I [personal story]."*
- Unintended insensitivity.** *"At least you have another child."* *"It was their time."*
- Distancing yourself,** pretending everything's fine, or changing topics if grief comes up.
- Trying to "fix" grief,** offer unsolicited advice, or talk about unresolved issues.
- Other things to avoid:



Contact us if you need more support:

1-800-123-4567  
info@domain.com

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# GRIEF ASSESSMENT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this assessment to reflect on how you are doing and where you may need support. Answer without fear of judgment—from yourself or others. Complete it privately or share with a counselor, care team member, or trusted support person. Save your responses to track your progress over time.

Contact us anytime you have questions or need support.

**1. EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS**—Check any you struggle with/feel regularly:

<input type="checkbox"/> Persistent tears	<input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness
<input type="checkbox"/> Anger/irritability	<input type="checkbox"/> Hopelessness
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety/worry	<input type="checkbox"/> Mood swings
<input type="checkbox"/> Guilt/regret	<input type="checkbox"/> Unfocused/forgetful
<input type="checkbox"/> Numb/detached	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant overwhelm

List any other emotional symptoms below:

**3. WHERE YOU ARE NOW**—Rate how true each statement feels right now: 0 = Not at all true | 1 = A little true | 2 = Somewhat true | 3 = Very true

I feel overwhelmed by my grief.	0	1	2	3
I avoid thinking and talking about my grief or the person.	0	1	2	3
I'm engaging in unusually risky or impulsive behavior.	0	1	2	3
I feel disconnected and am withdrawing socially.	0	1	2	3
I have trouble finding motivation to do everyday tasks.	0	1	2	3
I often feel like I'm stuck or not moving forward.	0	1	2	3
I feel like I've lost a part of my identity since the loss.	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3
died.	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3
	0	1	2	3

Edit any content to suit your organization's needs or replace this assessment with your own

If you are struggling with intense symptoms, contact your counselor therapist. Contact us if you need a...  
If you're struggling with questions a purpose, meaning, or why this happ spiritual care can help. Spiritual care emotional support focused on spiritual well-being based on your background and beliefs, whether or not you follow a faith tradition.  
Would you like to meet with our spiritual care team?  YES  NO

**2. PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS**—Check any you struggle with/feel regularly:

<input type="checkbox"/> Low energy/fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/> Stomach issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Sleep issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Heart palpitations
<input type="checkbox"/> Appetite changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Tightness in chest
<input type="checkbox"/> Headaches	<input type="checkbox"/> Shortness of breath
<input type="checkbox"/> Muscle pain/tension	<input type="checkbox"/> Increased illnesses

List any other physical symptoms below:

**4. RISK & SUPPORT NEEDS**—Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> I live alone or feel like I have little emotional support.	<input type="checkbox"/> I've had trouble taking care of basic needs (sleep, eating, hygiene, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm struggling to take care of my children/other dependents.	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel overwhelmed with responsibilities I didn't have before.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm struggling with other losses or traumas I've experienced.	<input type="checkbox"/> I feel disconnected from my sense of purpose or spiritual beliefs.
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm dealing with major life changes (e.g., moving, health issues, caregiving).	<input type="checkbox"/> I am relying on alcohol or other substances to cope with my grief.
<input type="checkbox"/> I feel stuck or unable to move forward in my grief.	<input type="checkbox"/> I've had thoughts of hopelessness, self-harm, or suicide.

**5. COPING STRATEGIES & NOTES**—What has helped you cope so far? Also use this space (and the space on the back of this page) to share other thoughts.

If you are struggling with intense physical symptoms, contact your doctor/primary care team. Let them know you're grieving a loss.

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# You're not alone. We're here for you.

Whether your loss was recent or a while ago, we are here to walk with you as you navigate your grief. We serve all individuals and families in our community who are grieving, providing grief support and referrals to community resources. Contact us to connect with a member of our bereavement team.

1-800-123-4567 | info@domain.com | www.website.com

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## PROLONGED GRIEF SELF-ASSESSMENT

It's normal to feel intense grief after loss, but some people can get "stuck" in these feelings for a long time. This is known as **prolonged grief disorder (PGD)**. PGD is not very common, but does affect about 7–10% of bereaved adults.

If it is less than 6 months after your loss, or you feel okay where you are with your grief, you don't need to fill this out. But if it's been 6 months or more and your grief still feels very intense, this assessment can help reveal possible signs of PGD. Even if you don't have PGD, your answers may show where you need more support. **This is a screening tool—not a diagnosis. Only a licensed mental health professional can determine if you have PGD.**

### OTHER THOUGHTS & QUESTIONS

Blank area for other thoughts and questions.

**INSTRUCTIONS**—Think about your statement, rate how much it applies to you.  
0 = Not at all | 1 = A little | 2 = Somewhat

**A. Intense yearning or longing:** I find myself having ongoing longing for the person who died.

**B. Preoccupation with the person:** Thoughts and memories of the person make it difficult to do other things.

**C. Difficulty accepting the loss:** I find it very hard to accept that the person's death is real.

0	1	2	3
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**D. Trouble moving on:** I can't move forward or plan for the future because of their death.

0	1	2	3
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**E. Emotional pain and distress:** Intense feelings (sadness, anger, bitterness, emptiness, etc.) over the loss interfere with daily life.

0	1	2	3
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**F. Functional impairment:** My grief interferes with my ability to function in work, relationships, or everyday life.

0	1	2	3
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**Add your ratings above and write the total here SCORE:**

**G. Duration:** It has been more than 12 months since my loved one died. If NO, how long has it been? \_\_\_\_\_

YES	NO
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**H. Support & mental health history:** I have no/limited social support and/or a history of mental health challenges.

YES	NO
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**I. History of trauma:** I have experienced traumatic events in the past or other significant/unexpected/traumatic/stigmatized losses.

YES	NO
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**Edit any content to suit your organization's needs or replace this assessment with your own**

**Results:** A score of 12 or higher, frequent 2–3 responses, plus any "YES" answers, may indicate a need for a professional assessment. Contact us if you have questions about your results. We can either provide more support or refer you to a mental health professional who can help determine whether or not you have PGD.

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