

GRIEF *Matters*

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Compassionate support through the first year of grief

1 MONTH AFTER LOSS

About a month or so after your loss, your grief symptoms might feel even more intense. This can be really confusing and very discouraging. Shouldn't grief be *harder* right after the loss, then get *easier* with time?

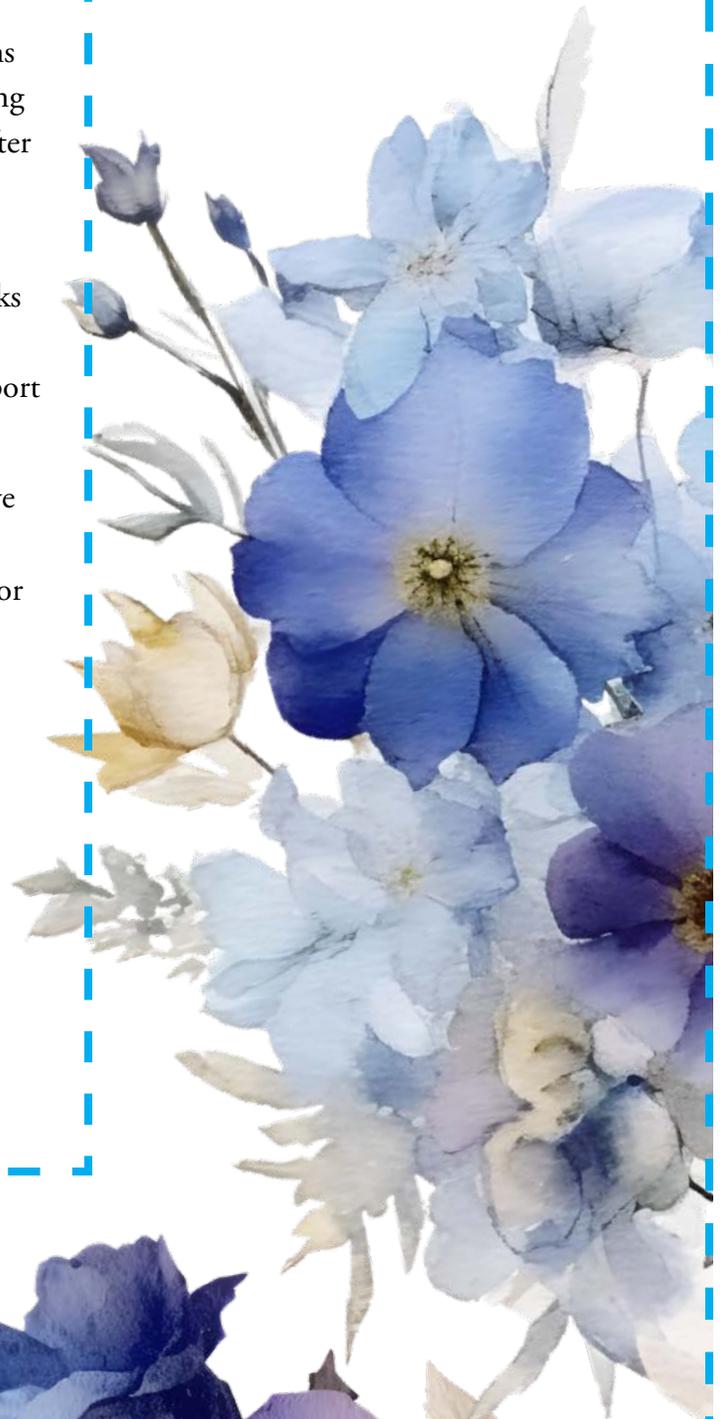
You might have felt an initial shock after your loss that helped numb you from the pain. The first days and weeks may have been filled with a whirlwind of activity and planning. There might have been an outpouring of support and attention from friends, family, and the community.

Once all that initial activity and support that may have been numbing is gone, you're left with a void. Now, there are feelings of longing, sadness, or depression to increase.

This newsletter addresses the next several weeks of the grieving process, which may be the first time you deeply feel the reality of your loss.

**"Grief, when it comes,
is nothing like we expect it to be."**

—Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking*



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EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS AFTER ONE MONTH

As shock wears off, a lot of other emotions can flood in. Existing emotions might also feel more intense. More symptoms of grief are listed below. You may feel some, all, none, or other emotions—all your feelings are valid. **Note your symptoms in a journal, grief assessment, or simply reflect on them.** Acknowledging your feelings can help you process grief. Consider talking to a trusted care team member, friend, family member, or counselor.

Guilt

You might feel guilt over things said or unsaid, done or not done. Try to release guilt; you did your best with the knowledge you had at the time.

Loneliness

As the reality of the loss sets in, you may experience waves of loneliness. This can bring a sense of isolation, especially as friends and family return to their lives.

Heightened emotions

Emotions that were present before the loss may be more intense now. You may cry more now than you did right after the loss. You might feel fine one moment, then something will trigger a sudden breakdown. It may be hard to regulate sadness, anger, and other emotions. This is all part of processing your grief.

Suicidal thoughts

The heavy emotions of grief may lead to thoughts of suicide. It's not abnormal or shameful to have thoughts about ending your own life after a loss. But they are a sign that you need to speak with a mental health professional. **Please contact us right away if you have suicidal thoughts so we can help you find extra support.**

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Anger

You may be angry at the person for being gone, other people involved in the death, or at fate or God. Acknowledge anger so you can process it.

Longing

You may yearn for the person so much that you hear their voice calling you, see them when you walk into a room, or feel their presence with you.

Your new normal

As outside support lessens, you may notice the person's absence leaves big gaps in daily life. You may need to take on more tasks or learn new roles.

Doing these tasks might make your sense of loss more intense. Over time, these tasks will become easier. For now, simplifying tasks and routines and celebrating small wins can bring stability and comfort.

- **Waking and sleeping:** Set an earlier alarm to give yourself extra time in the mornings. If falling asleep or sleeping alone is difficult, use a comfort item like a blanket, pillow, stuffed animal, or an item that belonged to the person.
- **Meals:** You may need to learn how to reduce portion sizes or cook on your own more often. Consider meal prepping, finding simple recipes online, using a meal service, or having someone over to share food or help with cooking.
- **Household tasks:** Spread chores throughout the week—doing a little bit every day will help you

stay occupied and avoid feeling overwhelmed. Get help from friends, family, or a cleaning service, if at all possible.

- **Returning to work:** Prepare a message for your team to avoid repeated questions. Ask if you can adjust your schedule or workload, take short breaks during the day, or split tasks into smaller steps. If your job isn't flexible, focus on making things easier for yourself outside of work.
- **Shared activities and rituals:** Switch shared activities for new ones. For example, if you had coffee together in the mornings, try reading during that time. If you watched TV together at night, use that time to call a friend. Listen to music or a podcast to fill quiet moments.
- **Social connection:** Staying connected to family and friends can help you begin to process your grief, but it's also normal to want time alone right now. If you're not ready for visits or outings, start small—like texting a trusted support person to check in.

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Tasks of grief

Grief experts have found shared patterns throughout many people's grief journeys and developed a list of "tasks" to follow, based on those patterns. They suggest breaking your grief journey into tasks, rather than in set stages, so that you can move through grief in a more flexible and personal way. Using these tasks as a guideline can help you feel like you're taking action and regaining a sense of control, rather than feeling like grief controls you.

The tasks of grief include:

- **Accepting the reality of the loss**
- **Processing the pain of grief**
- **Adjusting to the world without the person**
- **Finding ways to honor the person and maintain an enduring connection**
- **Seeking out new activities and relationships and planning for the future**

Some tasks may take longer to address than others. Some tasks will be ongoing. You might work on more than one task at a time. You may have to go back to a task you thought you had "finished." Again, it's best to view grief as a fluid process that is unique to each person and each loss.

At this point, you may have accepted the reality of the loss and are currently processing the pain of grief (if you are still having trouble accepting your loss, look online for resources or contact us for extra support). What may be much harder, as feelings of grief get more intense, is adjusting to a new world without the person who died.

For most people at this point, it may seem nearly impossible to even think about finding a way to move forward in that new world. You will get to each task in your own time and in your own way. For most people, it is *more* than enough work right now to focus on the first two tasks of grief.

COMMON MYTHS OF GRIEF

Misconceptions about grief can lead to guilt, confusion, or a sense of failure if your grief experience doesn't match up. Understanding common myths—and the truth—about grief can help you grieve with more self-compassion.

- **MYTH: Grief comes in stages and has a set timeline.** Grief doesn't follow one path. All timelines are unique and can vary widely by person and loss.
- **MYTH: Grief and mourning are the same thing.** Mourning is what we feel after loss; grieving is the process of working through those feelings. Healing comes from actively processing grief feelings and seeking support are what move healing forward.
- **MYTH: You need to "get over it."** There is no "right" way to recover from loss quickly, but grief can last many years and change form over time.
- **MYTH: Grief happens only right after a loss.** Grief can resurface months or years later, not just during these initial weeks and months.
- **MYTH: There's a right way to grieve.** Grief looks different for everyone. As long as you are not harming yourself or others, there is no wrong or right way to grieve.
- **MYTH: Grieving means being sad all the time.** You experience a wide range of feelings, even moments of joy, all of which are normal.
- **MYTH: Time heals all wounds.** Time can help ease grief, but actively processing grief feelings and seeking support are what move healing forward.
- **MYTH: Crying shows weakness.** Tears are a sign of strength. Crying helps relieve stress, lower blood pressure, and promote healing.
- **MYTH: Ignoring grief is the best way to get past it.** Avoiding emotions can lead to unresolved grief, which is much harder to cope with later.

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We know how challenging grief can be. We are experts in providing compassionate emotional and spiritual care for you and your loved ones throughout your grief journey. Please contact us for more information and support

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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

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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SECONDARY LOSSES

The death of someone important in your life and the big changes to routine that follow may lead to secondary losses. These are changes in other parts of your life that are often unexpected. Some common secondary losses are listed below.

- **Changing relationships.** You may notice changes in how you connect with your partner, children, family, friends, coworkers, or other people you know. Some relationships may grow stronger through shared grief. Others can become strained by misunderstandings, mismatched grieving styles, or emotional distance.
- **Loss of identity or roles.** You may feel as if you've lost your identity as a partner, parent, child, sibling, or friend. Know that you will always be a wife, a father, a sister, a grandchild, or whatever you were to the person who died. These special bonds can never be broken.
- **Loss of financial stability or a sense of security.** A death can result in loss of income or financial burdens—sometimes even loss of a home or living situation—making the world feel unpredictable and less safe.
- **Loss of future plans.** You may no longer be planning for the future. It's normal to feel empty. It's normal to feel different or to miss traditions.
- **Major decisions.** After a loss, you may feel the urge to make a big change, like moving or quitting your job. If it's something you've long considered, this may be the push you need. But if the feeling is new, it may be more about grief than an actual need to make this change.

Hold off on making big changes, if possible. Give yourself more time to understand what's driving those decisions. It's also okay to set these thoughts aside for now and focus on adjusting to your new normal.

As you work through these secondary losses, give yourself—and others around you—grace. Lean into open, honest communication with friends and family, and turn to counseling and grief support when you need it. Reach out to trusted people in your support network for financial or legal advice.

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LEANING INTO SELF-CARE

A few weeks after your loss, you may have more time to focus on self-care.

Remember, self-care isn't selfish—it's essential. Taking care of yourself can ease emotional and physical symptoms and support healing.

- **Eat well, hydrate, and stay active.** Choose easy, low-prep meals or have small, healthy snacks throughout the day. Drink enough water so your urine is almost clear. Limit highly processed, alcoholic, and caffeinated drinks. If you don't have a workout routine, try short walks, stretches, or gentle yoga.
- **Rest or nap when you can,** especially if you have trouble sleeping at night. Try a relaxing bedtime routine, like a bath, warm milk, or herbal tea, and limit screen time before bed.
- **Maintain personal hygiene.** Brush your teeth and hair, bathe, and change into clean clothes daily to help you feel a little more like yourself and maintain a sense of normalcy after loss.
- **Practice mindfulness and gratitude.** Being fully present in the moment and being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings can help ease grief. Some exercises
 - **Box breathing** **Text area: 5.5x8.25"** 4 seconds, letting your belly rise. 4 seconds, holding your breath. 4 seconds, exhaling slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds. Repeat 3–5 times.
 - **Meditation:** Sit or lie down in a quiet space. Start with a few deep, cleansing breaths, then breathe normally. Close your eyes, focus on your breath, and let thoughts come and go. Start with 2–5 minutes per day and work your way up. Download an app to help with guided meditation.
 - **Practicing gratitude:** Every day, write down (or think of) 1–3 things, big or small, you are grateful for.
- **Do calming activities** like reading, crafting, listening to music, having quiet time, cuddling pets, or connecting with loved ones.

How do you like to practice self-care? What brings you peace, calm, or happiness? Little by little, try to fit these activities back into your routine.

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GRIEVING CHILDREN & TEENS

Some adults believe children aren't grieving because they can quickly shift from sadness to play. But children's grief can last for years and resurface at big milestones in their lives. Here are some ways to support them.

- **Stick to a routine.** Loss can deeply affect children if it disrupts daily life. As you build new routines, let kids know that they are safe, cared for, and loved.
- **Speak to children honestly about death.** Avoid euphemisms (e.g., "he went to sleep") that may cause fear or confusion. Invite children to ask questions. It's okay to say "I don't know" if you don't have the answers.
- **Let kids be involved in memorials** or other rituals in simple, low-pressure ways. They could draw pictures, tell stories, or choose photos. If they don't want to participate, that's okay, too.
- **Give kids extra support during key moments**, such as:
 - Holidays, birthdays, and coming-of-age milestones
 - Graduations or award ceremonies
 - Firsts (first lost tooth, first day of school, first date, etc.)
 - Events involving other dances, breakfast with c.)
- **Validate their grief** s. They could:
 - Create a photo p.
 - Save an empty chair at important meals or events.
 - Share stories about their loved one.
 - Do art, crafts, or journaling.
- **Adjust your approach for grieving teens.** Many teens grieve more like adults and may prefer to grieve privately. Respect their wishes, but check in often and create a safe space for them to express their feelings. Watch for warning signs like major mood shifts, falling grades, or risky behavior.

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Grief can affect your parenting, too. You may have less energy and patience in the months after loss. It's normal to feel overwhelmed or unsure of how to support your child while grieving yourself. **Be kind to yourself, get support when you need it, and remember: showing up with love and honesty matters more than being a perfect parent.**

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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 spiritual care team member. If you're struggling with questions a purpose, meaning, or why this happens, 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.

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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

INSTRUCTIONS—Think about your statement, rate how much it applies to you.
0 = Not at all | 1 = A little | 2 = Somewhat | 3 = A great deal

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

A. Intense yearning or longing: I find myself having ongoing longing for the person who died.	0	1	2	3
B. Preoccupation with the person: Thoughts and memories of the person make it difficult to concentrate on other things.	0	1	2	3
C. Difficulty accepting the loss: I find it very hard to accept that the person's death is real.	0	1	2	3
D. Trouble moving on: I can't move forward or plan for the future because of their death.	0	1	2	3
E. Emotional pain and distress: Intense feelings (sadness, anger, bitterness, emptiness, etc.) over the loss interfere with daily life.	0	1	2	3
F. Functional impairment: My grief interferes with my ability to function in work, relationships, or everyday life.	0	1	2	3
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		
H. Support & mental health history: I have no/limited social support and/or a history of mental health challenges.	YES	NO		
I. History of trauma: I have experienced traumatic events in the past or other significant/unexpected/traumatic/stigmatized losses.	YES	NO		

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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