

GRIEF *Matters*

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Compassionate support through the first year of grief

3 MONTHS AFTER LOSS

A few months after a loss can feel like a strange time. Now you may really be feeling the pressure to “get back to normal,” even though you may still feel intense grief. Getting back to everyday, regular life—work, activities, and being social—might seem overwhelming.

You may be feeling alone in your grief journey as friends and family no longer grieve beside you. Around this time, you may start to question yourself more harshly. “*Why is everyone else moving on? What’s wrong with me? Shouldn’t I feel better by now?*” These thoughts can be discouraging when part

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A few short weeks after a big loss. If you don’t feel like you’re making progress in your grief journey, it’s easy to be frustrated with yourself on top of all your other feelings. Be patient with yourself as you grieve. Remember, grief is a process, not an event.

“Grief is not something you complete, but rather, you endure. Grief is not a task to finish and move on, but an element of yourself—an alteration of your being.”

—Gwen Flowers



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YOUR FEELINGS OF GRIEF NOW

Grief can make you feel like you're going in circles or even moving backward. This is completely normal and is actually a sign you are making progress. Some feelings you might be revisiting now are listed below.

Sorrow

This period is when the quiet, lasting absence of the person can be felt most deeply. As daily routines resume and milestones pass, the absence of your loved one may feel heavier. Sorrow can bring tears, fatigue, or a lasting ache—a sign of your love as you adjust to life without the person.

Depressed

Symptoms of depression may start a few weeks after a loss for many. As you find "normal," you may become more depressed, like your new normal is to never be happy again. Reach out if you're struggling. We're here to help you find the support you need.

Irritable

As the reality of the loss sinks in, small frustrations can build up. You may feel irritable and often reflects deeper feelings of sadness, helplessness, or feeling misunderstood, especially when support has faded but the pain remains.

Resentful

You may resent others for seeming to "move on," for not being there for you, for not holding space for your grief, or you may even resent the person who died. These feelings are normal, but if left unprocessed, they can delay healing. Acknowledge and talk or write about these feelings.

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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.

Processing the pain of grief

At this point in your grief journey, you may already have started addressing one or more of the "tasks of grief," listed below:

- **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**

As the quote on the front page says, "grief is not a task to finish and move on." You may still be working on accepting the loss, or you may be working on tasks further on in the list. How you follow the tasks of grief is very fluid and unique to you.

This newsletter will focus on things to help you process the pain of grief. If you're not quite ready to focus on this yet, that's okay. Just save this information for whenever you're ready.

Find positive and healthy outlets:

- **Be in nature.** Sit or take a walk outside, feel the sun on your face, or put your feet on the grass. Choose a place that reminds you of the person or a place that allows you to sit in quiet reflection.
- **Share memories of your loved one with others** and invite them to share their stories, too. Meet up with friends in person or post on social media.
- **Express your feelings** through journaling, art, music, or any creative outlet that you enjoy.
- **Talk out loud to your loved one.** Say what's on your mind, give updates about your day, or say their name aloud. This isn't the same as pretending the person is still alive—it's about continuing your bond, even after death.
- **Go through the person's things** when you're ready. There's no set timeline—some people do this right away, others need years. For some, each item carries memories, making this one of the most emotional parts of grief. If the person had a lot of belongings, as

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“Sometimes, grief feels like starting over—like the moment you accept it is also the moment it changes.”

—Megan Devine,
author of *It's OK That You're Not OK*

Connect your loss, you may find it easier to think about connecting with friends and family again. Social connection is an important part of processing your pain.

- **Lean on your support network.** Focus on people and groups who offer comfort and understanding, and seek new connections that meet you where you are. If some people feel distant or less supportive, try not to take it personally.
- **Plan simple, low-effort outings** to ease back into social life. Invite a friend over to catch up, or go out for coffee or tea. Find calm, peaceful places for quiet reflection. Go for a walk or take a drive to get out of the house and feel movement.
- **Consider joining a support group** for those who are going through a similar loss. Building relationships with people facing the same type of loss can be therapeutic. Contact us for information about grief support groups.

Try something new. A few months after a loss may be a good time to try out new things that can bring comfort, purpose, distraction, or a fresh outlook.

Some ideas include:

- Start a new hobby
- Start a new TV show
- Take a new class
- Try a new recipe
- Walk a different route
- Take a trip

Choose something low-pressure and manageable. Explore new things with curiosity, rather than trying to master them. This won't erase the pain, but it can remind you that life still holds possibilities.

Focus on your physical and mental health.

Grieving is exhausting work, emotionally and physically, and it can have a big impact on your body. Focus on getting enough sleep, staying active, eating healthy, and drinking water to help support your emotional recovery.

If you're in therapy or on medication, continue as prescribed. If not, consider options like talk, art, music, or pet therapy. Being in therapy is not a sign that something is “wrong with you.” It's a helpful tool for healing that can benefit everyone.

Schedule breaks. Rest is a must when you're grieving. Staying busy might offer an escape, but filling every moment with tasks can make grief harder to face later. Schedule quiet time each day to rest and recharge. This could include anything that allows your mind and body to rest, such as:

- Meditating
- Sitting in a quiet space
- Taking a nap
- Cuddling a pet or toy
- Drinking hot tea
- Watching calming TV
- Reading
- Taking a warm bath

If you can't seem to relax, take a moment to check in with yourself. Ask these questions:

1. **What are three emotions I feel right now?**
2. **Is there something I can do today to address one or more of these feelings?**
3. **What is one small thing I can do right now to bring myself some comfort?**

If there's something you can do to address your feelings that won't overwhelm you more, go ahead and do it. If not, just noticing how you feel can help you be more in tune with yourself.

How you process the pain of grief is personal to you. If you're feeling overwhelmed, please reach out—we're here to help. There's no shame in needing support. We walk alongside grieving families every day, and it's our privilege to su

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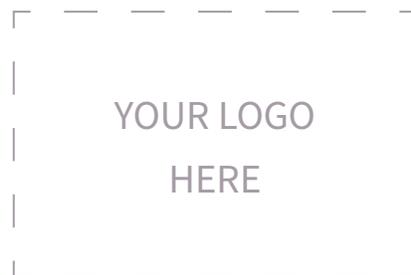
We're here for you.

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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ANNIVERSARIES & HOLIDAYS

By now, you may have faced—or might be anticipating—anniversaries, holidays, birthdays, or other special days without your loved one. These days often bring fresh waves of grief, even years after your loss. Here are some tips that may help.

- 1. Plan ahead.** Mark special dates on your calendar, then think about what you may need that day. Are there things you want to do or to avoid? Having a loose plan can reduce anxiety and help you feel more in control.
- 2. Allow yourself grace.** Let yourself feel all your feelings without judgment. It's okay to scale back plans, make traditions easier, take breaks to collect yourself, or say no to invitations and expectations that feel overwhelming.
- 3. Honor your loved one** in a small, meaningful way on special days, such as:
 - Lighting a candle or incense
 - Sharing memories and stories
 - Cooking their favorite meal
 - Playing a song they loved
 - Writing a letter to them
 - Setting a place for them at the table
 - Visiting a special place
 - Putting flowers out for them
- 4. Ask for support.** _____ day might be hard for you. Ask for con _____ tasks.
- 5. Include children** _____ ies that honor the person and let them express their feelings. Keep talks honest and age-appropriate. Contact us for information and support for grieving children.
- 6. Do something meaningful or uplifting.** Turning grief into purpose can be comforting. Consider volunteering, donating in your loved one's name, or doing something they used to enjoy.
- 7. Be kind to yourself.** You may not get through these special days as planned—and that's okay. Over time, you'll figure out what changes help you celebrate these days in a way that feels right.

There's no wrong or right way to handle anniversaries and holidays. What matters is honoring your needs and emotions, whether that means keeping old traditions, changing them, or doing something new.



Contact us with questions
or for more support.

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SPIRITUAL & EXISTENTIAL QUESTIONS AFTER LOSS

After a loss, it's common to ask big questions: *Why did this happen? Where are they now? What's the meaning of life without them?* In finding the answers, some people deepen their faith after loss. Others walk away from their beliefs. Both are valid, normal responses.

Even if you don't follow a religion, you may still find yourself wrestling with big questions about the meaning of life and death. Soul-searching is common after loss. We're not just missing the person. We're trying to make sense of the universe and our place in it.

Try the exercise below to explore these questions gently and without judgment. Find some quiet time to think about a big question on your mind now—or one you've thought about since your loss. Write or think about your answers.

Gentle exploration exercise

1. A big question I'm
2. This question mak
3. Something I struggle with (or that comforts me) about this question is:
4. Today, I will show myself kindness by:

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There is no one "right" answer to big existential questions. If a question feels too big to answer, that's okay. You can always return to it when you feel ready. Simply asking the questions and noticing your feelings about them can lead to spiritual growth. **If you do not have a faith community but would like non-denominational spiritual support, contact us for more resources.**



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DISENFRACTISED GRIEF

“Disenfranchised grief” is grief over a loss that society may not fully acknowledge, accept, or understand. While the death of a close family member often receives support, many other types of losses are downplayed or dismissed, such as:

- Stillbirth or miscarriage at *any* stage in the pregnancy
- The death of a pet
- Loss of a partner in an unrecognized, unvalidated, or non-traditional relationship
- Losses that carry stigma or that might be judged, such as suicides, overdoses, or a death of someone who was in prison, estranged, or abusive
- The death of someone you were close with but not legally connected to, like a neighbor, coworker, teacher, or mentor

When your loss isn’t recognized, it can feel like you don’t have permission to grieve. Hurtful remarks—*“It was just a dog,” “You can have another baby,” “You weren’t even married”*—can leave you feeling isolated and make grief even harder.

Tips for coping with

- **Give yourself full permission to grieve.** It’s real, even if others don’t understand it. Validating your grief can help you understand why you feel this way.
- **Seek supportive communities.** Look for groups, books, podcasts, blogs, or online spaces focused on your specific type of loss. Hearing others share similar experiences can be healing.
- **Set boundaries with others.** If someone dismisses your loss, it’s okay to say, *“This relationship mattered to me, and I need to grieve.”* You don’t need to explain or defend your grief to anyone.

No one else gets to decide whether your loss matters. If you’re grieving, it matters. Surrounding yourself with compassionate people can help you move through the pain—on your own terms, at your own pace. Let us know if you need referrals to grief resources specific to your loss.

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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 car 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

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.

B. Preoccupation with the person: Thoughts and memories of the person make it difficult to concentrate on 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:				
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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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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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