

# GRIEF *Matters*

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*Compassionate support through the first year of grief*

**1 YEAR AFTER LOSS**

If you're reading this, you may be nearing or have just passed a big milestone: the first anniversary of your loss. Similar feelings that came up at six months might be coming up again: *"How did I survive a whole year already?"* And maybe at the same time, *"It's only been a year? It feels like I've been grieving forever!"*

This past year, you've been doing the hard work of processing your loss. Hopefully by now, you've started on a path toward healing. Many people who have found healthy ways to cope start to feel settled into a "new normal" as

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But adjusting doesn't mean the grief journey is over. The pain of grief is often longer and less predictable than we expect. This newsletter offers guidance for the road ahead as you move forward with your grief into the future.

**"Grief changes shape, but it never ends.  
All you can do is hope that grief will be  
transformed and...you will be together again  
in memory, that there will be solace and  
pleasure there, not just loss."**

*—Keanu Reeves*

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## What to expect

As you may have guessed, grief doesn't magically stop at the one-year mark. It will continue to show up in your life in different ways. Over time, you can learn to live with it and even grow around it. Below are some things people experience as they move forward in their grief journeys. Remember that your journey is unique, so don't worry if these don't apply to you.

**Feelings to revisit and process:** As you approach this anniversary, you may feel old emotions coming back—or new ones surfacing that you didn't have a chance to process earlier in the year. You might:

- **Feel angry** again about the circumstances around the loss or at the people who were involved
- **Be overwhelmed** by the realization that you are not done grieving
- **Feel waves of sadness** when coming across reminders you thought you'd gotten used to
- **Have fresh guilt** over things in the past, things left unsaid, or things you didn't do

This isn't a setback. It's the natural way grief unfolds. Use this anniversary of your loss to check in with your feelings. **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.

**Fewer people talk about your loved one:** Early in grief, friends and family may have checked in with you to ask how you were doing. They may have wished you strength and peace as you got through those days without the person. Now, they may not reach out as often—or maybe not at all.

It's normal for outside support to taper off after the first few months and continue to lessen over time. Though you know your friends and family still care, this can still make you feel hurt and alone.

As you heal from loss, you may start to wish other people would talk about the person who died more. Don't be afraid to start the conversation. Once you do, you might find a lot of people are happy to join. Some ideas include:

- **Bring your loved one up** when you're talking to people who knew them. You could start with, *"I was just thinking about the time [Name]..."*
- **Ask people to share photos or memories** of your loved one via text or on social media. You can use anniversaries, holidays, and special days as prompts: *"For [Name]'s birthday, I'd love to hear your favorite memory of them."*
- **Invite friends and family to a gathering** (a meal, an activity, a birthday party, etc.) to celebrate the person together.

### Confusion, guilt, or fear about "moving on":

As you grow around your loss, grief will eventually feel smaller and more manageable. You may have more joyful moments, laugh more, or even have the same love for new people that you had for the person who died.

These emotions may make you feel guilty or like you're doing something wrong. But they are not a sign that you're "moving on" or forgetting your loved one. All of these feelings are normal. You are continuing—and that's a good thing. **Quote box: 3.625x2.25"**

**If you're worried about forgetting or dishonoring your loved one's memory, remember that they played a role in shaping the person you are, so they will always be a part of you. You can remember and honor them by living your life joyfully and to the fullest.**

## Stepping into the future

This year, you have faced pain, made big changes, and found ways to cope through the hardest days. Even when you struggled, you kept going. Trust the work you've done; it all counts. If you've let yourself feel your feelings, you've built a good foundation to support you moving forward. So when fresh waves of grief come, remember that you've done hard things—and you can do them again.

### Review the five tasks of grief:

- **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**

You may have moved past some tasks or still be working on others—there's no set deadline or order. Thinking about which tasks you're dealing with now can help you see where you are in your grief journey. You can also try the reflection activity below.

**Growth after loss:** For many who have suffered a loss, new strength, perspective, purpose, or even positive change can quietly grow over time. This is known as post-traumatic growth (PTG). Maybe your grief journey has helped you to:

- **Appreciate life more deeply**
- **Form closer relationships**
- **Find resilience or spiritual growth**
- **Know your values and what truly matters**
- **Help others in meaningful ways**

In what ways has your grief journey helped you grow? Growth after loss is not required—it's simply a wonderful possibility. If in moments of reflection you find that grief has shaped you into someone deeper, softer, stronger, or more awake to life, know that this, too, is part of your journey.

**Continuing your grief journey:** As you continue on your path, remember that you are not alone. While many bereavement programs offer structured support for at least 13 months after a patient's death, that doesn't mean your grief or access to support ends there. Our care team can still offer referrals, resources, and guidance.

## ONE-YEAR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

As your grief continues to evolve, these questions can help you note your progress and areas where you feel stuck. You can do this activity in writing, by talking with someone you trust, or by thinking about your answers.

- **What has changed most for me since I lost my loved one?** Which of the **five tasks of grief (see above) have I completed?** Have you felt **stuck**, hesitant, or overwhelmed? Without judgment or guilt.
- **What coping strategies have helped me the most?** Are there healthy routines or practices that work well for you?
- **What strengths have I discovered in myself over the past year?** Think about moments of resilience, vulnerability, or courage.
- **What do I need more of right now?** Support, rest, connection, permission to feel your feelings? Who or what can you turn to moving forward? Think of people, places, or activities that help you feel centered and secure.

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Asking for support at *any* point in your grief journey is not a sign of weakness. Acknowledge your progress and move forward at your own pace. Contact

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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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## GRIEF ATTACKS

You may now feel like daily routines are more manageable, and grief is a bit lighter. There might be more good days than bad—even moments of peace or joy. But it's also normal for big waves of grief to still catch you off guard.

**What is a grief attack?** A grief attack is a sudden, strong wave of sadness, tearfulness, longing, or any other feeling of grief. They can hit you at moments you'd expect, like when you come across these common triggers:

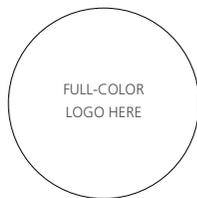
- **Favorites (music, food, movies, etc.)**
- **Milestones, anniversaries, holidays**
- **Scents and smells**
- **Quiet moments of reflection**
- **Seeing a person who looks like them**
- **Anything that brings up a memory**

Grief attacks can also hit you when you don't expect them at all. Having a grief attack doesn't mean something is wrong with you. This is a normal, healthy part of the grieving process.

### What you can do during a grief attack

- **Name your feelings.** Say aloud, write down, or think to yourself: *"I'm feeling really [sad/angry/afraid/etc]. This is grief. My body and mind are reacting to these feelings. This \_\_\_\_\_ y."*
- **Take slow, deep breaths.** **Text area: 5.5x8.25"** Take a walk, stretch, or do light exercise to \_\_\_\_\_
- **Seek comfort.** Wrap yourself in a soft blanket, drink a warm beverage, take a warm bath or shower, light a scented candle, or hold a calming object.
- **Reach out to someone you trust** by phone or text to feel connected. Even a social media post can help you feel a little less alone.
- **Let yourself cry when you can.** Tears are not a sign of weakness, but a healthy release that can help reduce stress. If you can't cry in the moment, take time to cry or process those feelings later when it feels safe.

**Grief attacks do not take away from your progress.** In time, they'll be easier to handle—but there's always a chance they'll resurface. When they do, let them pass, acknowledge your feelings without judgment, and keep pushing forward.



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## HONORING YOUR LOVED ONE

There are simple ways to honor loved ones on special days, such as lighting a candle, playing their favorite music, telling their story, or eating their favorite food. These small rituals aren't just for holidays or anniversaries; they're easy ways to keep your loved one's memory present every day.

On big milestones, like the first anniversary of your loss, you may feel called to honor your loved one in more significant ways. As you carry memories of the person, you also have the chance to create *new* memories that include them—even after they're gone. Some ideas for lasting memorials:

- **Planting a perennial flower**, a tree, or tending a special houseplant or a memorial garden
- **Donating to their favorite charity**, starting a fundraiser in their honor, collecting donations for their school, or setting up a scholarship fund in their name at their alma mater
- **Organizing a volunteer event** for a cause that was important to them, such as a park clean-up, pet adoption, food/clothing/book drive, etc.
- **Creating a remembrance** (e.g., photo album, scrapbook, collage, keepsake quilt, recording) | **Text area: 5.5x8.25"**
- **Recording a video** (e.g., video message, vlog) | **Text area: 5.5x8.25"** | others; search online for free platforms (for example, StoryCorps Connect) to archive and share with friends and family

Finding unique ways to honor the person can be comforting and give you a sense of purpose. Activities like these also allow your loved one's name to live on, not just in your heart, but out in the world. Inviting friends, family, and your community to help plan or participate can provide support and connection.

The grief and love you carry are *yours*, and so is how you choose to express and celebrate them. **Just like there is no wrong way to grieve, there is no wrong way to honor a life. However you choose to do it, let it be meaningful to you.**

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## FADING MEMORIES, LASTING BONDS

You might be afraid you're forgetting the person when your memories of them start to fade. It's normal for details to blur as time goes on—the way their voice sounded, their laugh, their quirks, the way they smelled.

**Be gentle with yourself if you begin to forget things.** Even if you can't remember every detail about them, your love will always live on. Maintain your connection by looking at photos, talking about the person, setting out flowers, visiting a special place, or trying a remembrance ritual alone or with loved ones.

**Remembrance ritual:** This candlelighting ceremony is a way to honor the person while reflecting on your journey. Use real or LED candles, set stones in a pattern, release flowers in water, or do whatever feels right for you.

- 1. Prepare.** Gather any supplies, pictures, or mementos you'd like to include. Think about or write down what each candle (or item) will represent.
- 2. Open the ritual.** In a quiet, calm space, take a moment of silence, then say, "We light these candles in honor of [the person]."
- 3. Light each candle** and say out loud what the candle represents. Ideas for what to say are below, o
- 4. Close the ritual.** Let each candle burn for a moment (never leave a candle burning unattended). When you're ready, say, "We love you."

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ant (never leave a  
wish, blessing, or just

**The first candle is for grief.** The pain of loss is deep, but it reflects the depth of our love. As we light it, we remember.



**The second candle is for the courage** to face sorrow, comfort each other, and keep moving forward. As we light it, we remember.



**The third candle is for the memories,** every laugh and tear, for all the shared moments, big and small. As we light it, we remember.

**The fourth candle is for love.** You'll always hold a place in our hearts, and our lasting bonds hold strong. As we light it, we remember.



**The last candle is for hope, peace, and gratitude.** We will honor you by living a full, joyful life. Thank you for all you shared. As we light it, we remember.

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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
_____	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.

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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

<b>A. Intense yearning or longing:</b> I find myself having ongoing longing for the person who died.	0	1	2	3
<b>B. Preoccupation with the person:</b> Thoughts and memories of the person make it difficult to concentrate on other things.	0	1	2	3
<b>C. Difficulty accepting the loss:</b> I find it very hard to accept that the person's death is real.	0	1	2	3
<b>D. Trouble moving on:</b> I can't move forward or plan for the future because of their death.	0	1	2	3
<b>E. Emotional pain and distress:</b> Intense feelings (sadness, anger, bitterness, emptiness, etc.) over the loss interfere with daily life.	0	1	2	3
<b>F. Functional impairment:</b> My grief interferes with my ability to function in work, relationships, or everyday life.	0	1	2	3
<b>Add your ratings above and write the total here</b> <b>SCORE:</b>				
<b>G. Duration:</b> It has been more than 12 months since my loved one died. If NO, how long has it been? _____	YES	NO		
<b>H. Support &amp; mental health history:</b> I have no/limited social support and/or a history of mental health challenges.	YES	NO		
<b>I. History of trauma:</b> 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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