

THE IMPORTANCE OF REFLECTION

Living with grief every day can make it hard to notice your progress over time. When old feelings resurface, it's easy to feel frustrated and stuck. Reflecting on your progress can help. Take a moment to think about your grief journey, then answer the questions below.

Progress reflection exercise

1. Do you have more good days now than you did early on?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
2. Do you feel less numb or more connected to life around you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
3. Are you less tearful throughout the day?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
4. Can you do more day-to-day tasks than you could before?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
5. Are you sleeping or eating better now?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
6. Have any of your physical symptoms improved?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
7. Are you maintaining routines or setting new ones?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
8. Can you better recognize when a wave of grief is coming?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
9. Do you have more moments of joy, peace, or calm?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
10. Can you talk/think about the person with happiness at times?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
11. Have you found meaningful ways to honor their memory?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
12. Do you have a support network (friends, family, care teams)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
13. Have you returned to any activities you used to enjoy?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
14. Is it easier to be around others, even if just for short periods?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
15. Can you see a future that includes joy, hope, or purpose?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

If you had even one or two **Yes** answers, consider it progress! Give yourself credit and acknowledge what you've accomplished.

If you said **No** to every question or you are still really struggling, contact us so we can provide support. You don't have to do this alone.

“Sometimes you have to look back in order to understand the things that lie ahead.”

—Yvonne Woon

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or for more support.

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PROLONGED & COMPLICATED GRIEF

For most people, the hardest period of grief will last about one to two years. Intense symptoms begin to ease within six months to a year after loss. **Prolonged grief disorder (PGD, also known as complicated grief) is intense, persistent grief that disrupts daily life and lasts several months or more.** Though it's not really common, PGD affects about 7–10% of grieving adults.

Risk factors for PGD—You may be at higher risk of having PGD if you:

- Are under 60 years old
- Had a very close or dependent relationship with the person who died, such as the loss of a partner or child
- Have little or no support from others
- Have a history of depression or other mental health conditions
- Tend to have mostly negative or hopeless thoughts
- Have experienced other losses, trauma, or big stressors in life

Signs to watch for—While the usual grief journey has ups and downs, there are no good days with complicated grief. Other signs you may have complicated grief include:

- Severe symptoms lasting more than six months
- Emotional pain interferes with everyday tasks for a long period of time
- Intense longing for the person or separation distress
- Still having a lot of trouble accepting the loss
- Not able to make plans or set goals for the future

PGD must be diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional. If you are more than six months past your loss and any of the above applies, you may want to check in with a licensed therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Having complicated grief is not a personal failure. It is simply a sign you need extra support. If you think you might have PGD, let us know. We can provide a self-assessment or a referral if needed.

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REDEFINING IDENTITY & PURPOSE

The early months of grief were about surviving day to day. Now, as the anniversary of your loss approaches, your focus may shift from just getting through the day to finding new meaning in life.

You might start asking yourself, “*Who am I now? What is my purpose? What’s next?*” Even if the answers are not clear now, these questions are a good sign that you are moving forward in your grief journey.

Grief and identity

Loss can change how you see yourself, especially if you were really close with the person. It’s important to take small steps to reconnect with yourself. How you do this will be unique, but here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Return to a hobby or passion** you once enjoyed. It doesn’t have to be a big project. Taking just a few minutes a day to do something you like doing can remind you of who you are.
- **Try something new.** Learn a new skill, take a class, or explore a new topic to help you discover new things about yourself.
- **Volunteer.** Helping others in your community can foster compassion and give you shared purpose, meaning, and connection.
- **Nurture your spirituality or faith,** if you follow a practice, to help you feel connected. It’s also normal to question or change beliefs after loss. Some explore other spiritual paths, like being in nature, practicing mindfulness and gratitude, or creative expression.
- **Journaling** can reveal patterns in your feelings and how you’ve changed after loss. It is also a good outlet for reflection and to process emotions.
- **Talk to a trusted friend, support group, or counselor** to help you sort through your thoughts about your identity and future.

There’s no deadline for redefining your purpose. Identity after loss returns in small steps and quiet moments of self-discovery. Be patient with the process. You’ve always been—and still are—*you*, even as you find new meaning in life.



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