

Understanding Grief & Finding What Helps

Grief is a natural response to loss. Everyone grieves differently, and there is no set time frame for grief. You can grieve anything, or anyone you value; a person, a place, an ability, a pet, an identity, a relationship, an imagined future, or the state of the world.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT GRIEF

- Grief is a natural response to loss, and you can grieve anything or anyone you value
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve, and everyone's experience is different
- Grief is not just sadness, grief is full of many different emotions
- Grief is non-linear and does not occur in set stages
- Grief is experienced in both the mind and body, affecting thoughts, emotions, and physical wellbeing

There is no right or wrong way to grieve

Everyone grieves differently, and the nature of your grief is shaped by many factors. These factors could include:

- Your relationship to the person or thing you have lost.
- Your age, gender, and personality.
- The way in which you lost someone or something.
- Your sense of safety and security.
- The strength of your support network.
- Your health – both physical and mental
- Your cultural background
- Your faith or religious beliefs
- Your past experiences of loss

There might be times when you find yourself comparing your grief to the grief of others. You might judge yourself or other people for how they are grieving. In grief, it's important to show yourself and others compassion. We will all navigate grief in our own ways. How we grieve doesn't say anything about us, other than we are each unique.

Grief is not just sadness

There are many different emotions within grief, and you can feel multiple emotions at one time.

When you are grieving, you might feel:

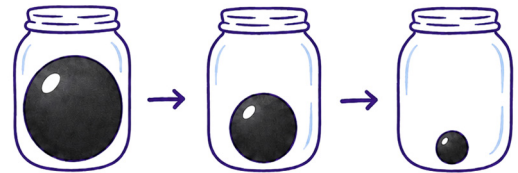
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|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| • Angry | • Frustrated | • Fearful |
| • Sad | • Shocked | • Lonely |
| • Numb | • Confused | • Lost |
| • Despondent | • Anxious | • Overwhelmed |
| • Tender | • Guilty | • Hopeless |
| • Yearning | • Regretful | • Jealous |
| • Love | • Relief | • Panicked |
| • Joyful | • Resentful | |

There is no time frame for grief

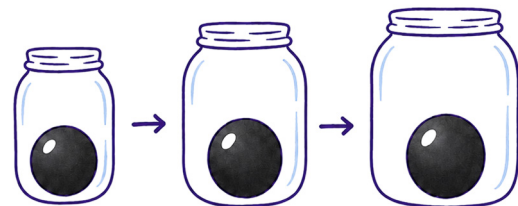
There is a myth that the grieving journey is a straight line, with set stages and a clear endpoint. The truth is that grief does not follow a straight line or a clearly defined set of stages. The grieving journey has twists and turns, and often emotions can hit you out of nowhere, like a big wave in the ocean. You can grieve before someone has died, and you can begin grieving months or years after your loss. For most people, grief will not have an endpoint. Instead of grief disappearing, they will grow around their grief, integrating it into their lives.

GROWING AROUND GRIEF

People tend to believe that grief shrinks over time



What often happens is, we grow around our grief



This does not mean that you will always feel intense grief. For many people, there is a period of intense grieving immediately after a loss, or when life has seemingly returned to 'normal', which eases over months and years. A griever may re-experience this intense feeling of grief during certain events or moments, such as anniversaries, birthdays, holidays, or when a certain song comes on the radio.

You can feel grief in your body

Our brains and bodies are closely connected, and many people will describe feeling grief in their bodies.

People describe experiencing:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • A sense of emptiness | • Being unable to sleep |
| • A feeling of exhaustion and heaviness | • Wanting to sleep all the time |
| • Brain fog | • A tightness in their chest |
| • Feeling detached from the body | • Shortness of breath |
| • Body aches | • A racing heart |
| • Headaches | • Loss of appetite |
| • Stomach aches or nausea | • An increased appetite. |

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Finding what helps

Everyone grieves differently, and different things will help different people at different times. A good place to start is returning to things that have supported you in the past, while gently exploring new ways to care for yourself.

- Below are some suggestions for caring for yourself through grief. You don't need to do everything on this list, start small, and remember that small actions can make a big difference over time.
- Support your body with rest, nourishment, and gentle movement where possible.
- Express your thoughts and feelings through writing, creativity, mindfulness, or talking with someone you trust.
- Lean on safe and supportive people, communities, or grief support forums for connection.
- Connect with spiritual, cultural, or personal practices that support you.

When grief doesn't ease

If you find that your grief remains persistent, overwhelming and debilitating, and is preventing you from living your life in the way you would like, it can be helpful to seek specialist grief support. You can start by speaking to your GP or exploring the supports listed below.

SUPPORT

- Grief and loss support can be accessed through SANE's RecoveryClub. To join RecoveryClub, register through the [SANE website](#).
- The grief and loss [space on the SANE forums](#) gives another safe opportunity to share, remember and find support with others navigating loss.
- Speak to your GP about accessing your local grief or bereavement service.

[National Association for Loss and Grief](#)

Access up to 12 free grief support sessions with a trained volunteer.

1300 474 33

[Red Nose](#)

Free support for anyone grieving the sudden loss of a child or young person.

1300 308 307

[Suicide Bereavement](#)

[StandBy](#)

Free grief support for those bereaved by suicide.

1300 727 247

[Thirrili](#)

Free grief support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders bereaved by suicide.

1800 805 801

SANE resources:

- How to Support Someone Who is Grieving
- How to Support a Grieving Child or Young Person
- 5 Strategies for Navigating Life After Loss

Other resources:

- [‘This Is Grief’](#) – a gentle guide for individuals & families.
- Megan Devine’s [‘Tips for Navigating Early Grief’](#).