

When Grief Doesn't Ease

How long should grief last?

There is no set time frame for grief, and there is no wrong or right way to grieve. Most people will experience a period of 'acute grief' in the weeks and months post-loss that will ease over time. This does not mean that grief will disappear completely; often, people grow around their grief and find ways to integrate it into their lives.

Feelings of 'acute grief' can still return in moments, for example, during important life events, anniversaries, or when a favourite song comes on the radio. However, the difference is that these 'waves of grief' or 'grief bombs', as some people call them, are not overwhelming, persistent or severely dysregulating – they come, and they go.

For some people, grief will remain persistent, overwhelming, and debilitating – preventing them from living their life in the ways they would like.

Why does grief not ease for some people?

Everyone's grief is unique, and there are many complicating factors that can prevent someone's grief from easing.

Some of these factors include:

- A loss that was experienced as traumatic.
- Pre-existing mental or physical health conditions.
- Stressful life circumstances, such as housing or financial instability.
- Social isolation.
- A close relationship with the deceased.

As a result of these complicating factors, some people will experience the onset or worsening of existing mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders or depression. A small but significant proportion of bereaved people may also experience Prolonged Grief Disorder, previously referred to as Complicated Grief.

Symptoms of Prolonged Grief Disorder include:

- Intense emotional pain that continues long after the loss.
- Persistent yearning for the person who died.
- Feeling stuck in grief or unable to move forward.
- Avoiding reminders of the loss — or becoming fixated on them.
- Emotional numbness or isolation from others.
- Loss of meaning or hope for the future.

How do I know if I am experiencing a mental health condition?

Only a registered medical or mental health practitioner can diagnose a mental health condition. If you feel stuck in your grief and find it hard to live your life in the way you want to, it may help to reach out for professional grief support. Regardless of whether you meet the criteria for a mental disorder or not, you are deserving of support.

Where can I find support?

You can start by speaking to your GP to explore local grief and bereavement services available to you, or by exploring the supports listed below.

Is there anything I can do to support myself?

When grief is challenging or prolonged, it can be very difficult to navigate alone – professional support is recommended. However, there are things you can do to support yourself. A good place to start is by 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.

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:

- 5 Strategies for Navigating Life After Loss
- Understanding Grief & Finding What Helps

Other resources:

- [What Is Your Grief?](#) – a helpful online resource for learning more about grief and loss.
- [This Is Grief](#) – a gentle guide for individuals and families.