

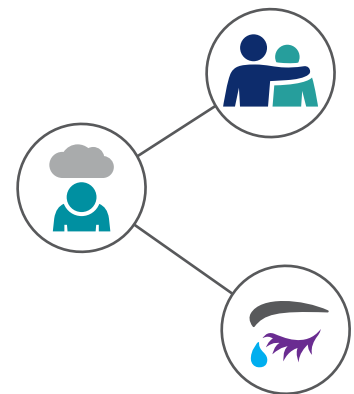
Dealing with Grief, Loss and Death



GRIEF IS THE NATURAL HUMAN RESPONSE TO LOSS, especially the emotional response to someone we love dying or being taken away from us. Though the death of a loved one is an obvious cause of grief, any loss can result in grief, such as: Divorce or a relationship ending, Loss of a friendship, loss of good health, losing a pet, losing financial stability, relocation and others. Grief manifests as sadness, disbelief, anger, emptiness, changes in appetite and sleep, anxiety and inability to think clearly.

The process of grieving is individual and has no set time frame. Depending on the cause, grief can last weeks, months or years. With deaths, a general guideline is that healing can occur over about a year, which takes into consideration anniversary issues throughout the year (birthdays, holidays and the like) and other reminders of the person who is gone. Some people need longer than that, and that is also normal.

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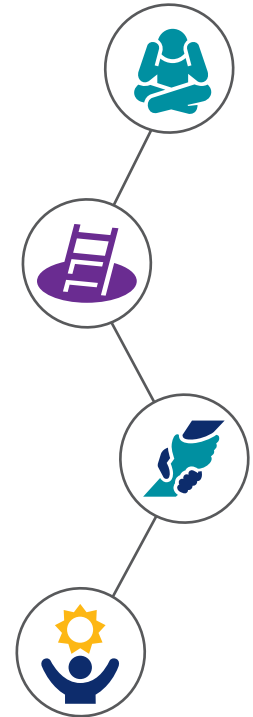
The process of grieving does not go away simply by suppressing or ignoring the process. It is perhaps more important than usually thought NOT to feel as if we have to be strong after a loss. Tears are normal. Honest reflection about grief, loss and other emotions is healthier than suppressing them. It is normal for grief to lessen in intensity over time, but grief can resurge from time to time especially when we are under stress.

The “goal” of grieving is not to forget the person we’ve lost. It is to accept the loss and move forward with the rest of life. It can help to recognize that grief can lead to depression, but that depression is not the same thing. Major Depression is not simply depressed mood. Major Depression can occur without a specific loss.

Elizabeth Kubler Ross in 1969 described “five stages of grief”: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance. It’s important to know that these stages are simply guidelines, and are not rigid or experienced by everyone or everyone in sequence. Essentially, her point is that since there is no “typical” loss, that there is no “typical response” to loss.

In order to heal from grief there are several things that we can do. First and foremost, when able, try to face the grief directly. Sometimes it helps to write about the person who is gone, to enumerate positives about the person, and to consciously remember the good times we had with them.

If you are in emotional crisis, thinking about suicide, or are concerned about someone who might be, please call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. You can also call the National Suicide Hotline at 1-800-273-8255 or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting HOME to 741741.



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