



Grief and loss...

Grief is the normal response of sorrow, emotion and confusion that comes from losing someone or something important to you. It is a natural part of life, following death, divorce, job loss, a move away from friends and family or loss of good health due to illness.

How does grief feel?

Just after a death or loss, you may feel empty and numb, as if you are in shock. You may notice physical changes such as trembling, nausea, trouble breathing, muscle weakness, dry mouth or trouble sleeping and eating.

You may become angry – at a situation, a particular person, or just angry in general. Almost everyone in grief also experiences guilt. Guilt is often expressed as ‘I could have, I should have, and I wish I would have’ statements.

People in grief may have strange dreams or nightmares, be absent-minded, withdraw socially, or lack the desire to return to work. While these feelings and behaviours are normal during grief, they will pass.

How long does grief last?

Grief lasts as long as it takes you to accept and learn to live with your loss. For some people, grief lasts a few months. For others, grieving may take years.

The length of time spent grieving is different for each person. There are many reasons for the differences, including personality, health, coping style, culture, family background and life experiences. The time spent

grieving also depends on your relationship with the person lost and how prepared you were for the loss.

When does grief start?

Some people dismiss feeling of loss for years after the person has passed.

How will I know when I’m done grieving?

Every person who experiences a death or other loss must complete a four-step grieving process:

1. Accept the loss
2. Work through and feel the physical and emotional pain of grief
3. Adjust to living in a world without the person or item lost, and
4. Move on with life

The grieving process is over only when a person completes the four steps.

How does grief differ from depression?

Depression is more than a feeling of grief after losing someone or something you love. Clinical depression is a whole body disorder. It can take over the way you think and feel. See our **Depression** factsheet.

How to cope with grief and loss

Coping with Grief

Each one of us has an individual style of coping with painful experiences. The list below may help you generate ideas about how to manage feelings of grief.

Talk to family or friends

Talking to friends who have dealt with loss in the past can help you identify new ways of coping. Only you know what works best with your personality and lifestyle. One way to examine your own style of coping is to recall the ways you've dealt with painful times in the past.

Have a look at the list below for some useful tips:

- Read poetry or books
- Engage in social activities
- Exercise
- Eat healthy, good foods
- Seek spiritual support
- Take time to relax
- Join a support group
- Listen to music
- Be patient with yourself
- Let yourself feel grief

It's important to note that some ways of coping with grief are helpful, like talking to others or writing in a journal. Others may be hurtful or destructive to the healing process, like abusing substances or isolating yourself. Healthy coping skills are important in resolving a loss and helping you move forward in the healing process.

Counselling

Talking to someone completely unrelated to your loss can be very beneficial. Trained counsellors can help you through the grieving process and provide the necessary support. Ask Atrium for more details on our loss and grief counselling service.

Supporting others who are grieving

As the shock of the loss fades, there is a tendency on the part of the griever to feel more pain and sadness. Well-meaning friends may avoid discussing the subject due to their own discomfort with grief or their fear of making the person feel bad. As a result, people who are grieving often feel more isolated or lonely in their grief.

People who are grieving are likely to fluctuate between wanting some time to themselves and wanting closeness with others. They may want someone to talk to about their feelings. Below are some ways that you can help friends experiencing loss.

- Be a good listener
- Ask about their feelings
- Just sit with them
- Share your feelings
- Ask about their loss
- Remember the loss
- Talk about the person, say the person's name
- Make telephone calls
- Acknowledge the pain
- Let them feel sad
- Be available when you can
- Do not minimize grief
- Talk about your own losses

For more help or information, visit your GP or contact:

Atrium Clinic and Therapy Centre
13 Weston Road, Southend
01702 342 256
www.atriumclinic.co.uk

For more background reading:

Mental Health Foundation
020 780 31101
www.mentalhealth.org.uk

All enquiries are dealt with compassionately, efficiently and in the strictest confidence.

A GP referral is not essential for self-funding patients

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