



After Someone Dies

What you may experience, what can be normal, and when to reach out for help

When someone dies, there isn't one right way to grieve. You may cry a lot. You may not cry at all. You may feel devastated one moment and surprisingly okay the next. You may feel several things at once, or have trouble figuring out what you feel at all.

Grief can affect your emotions, your body, your thoughts, your relationships and your ability to manage everyday life.



In the first few days and weeks

The early days after a death can feel like a blur. There may be people to talk to, decisions to make, arrangements to deal with and everyday responsibilities that still need your attention, even when it is difficult to think clearly.

You may feel:

- shocked or numb
- sad
- angry
- guilty
- relieved
- anxious or afraid
- lonely
- confused
- irritated with people
- overwhelmed
- like none of this is real

You may feel several of these things at the same time. Some feelings, especially relief, anger or numbness, can be confusing or uncomfortable. Feelings are not a measure of how much the person meant to you, and there is no one reaction you are supposed to have.



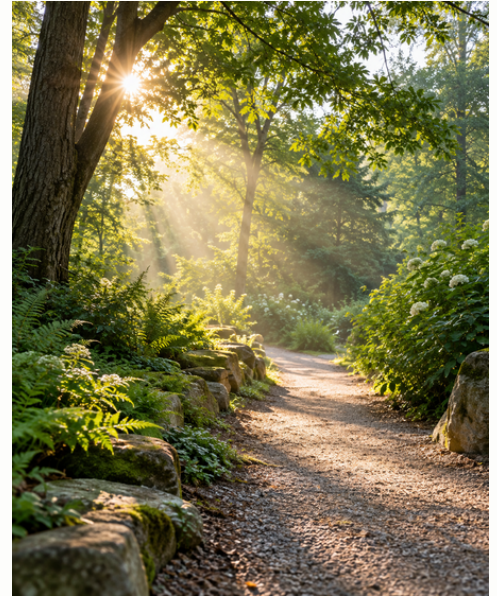
What Can Be Normal

Grief can affect your brain

Grief can make it hard to think clearly. You may forget conversations, lose things, have trouble concentrating, read the same thing several times or struggle to make decisions. You may feel mentally tired even when you haven't done very much.

People sometimes call this "grief brain."

For now: write important things down use reminders and ask someone you trust to help you keep track of things when you need it.



Grief can be physical

Grief can affect your body too. You may experience:

- exhaustion
- headaches
- muscle tension
- nausea or an upset stomach
- changes in appetite
- difficulty sleeping
- sleeping more than usual
- restlessness
- aches and pains
- changes in energy

Physical symptoms can have many causes. New, severe or concerning symptoms should still be discussed with a healthcare professional.

Grief can come in waves

Sometimes you know exactly what triggered a wave of grief. It might be a song, a smell, a place, a memory, a date or something someone says.

Other times it seems to come out of nowhere.

A harder day does not mean you are going backwards. A good day does not mean you are finished grieving.

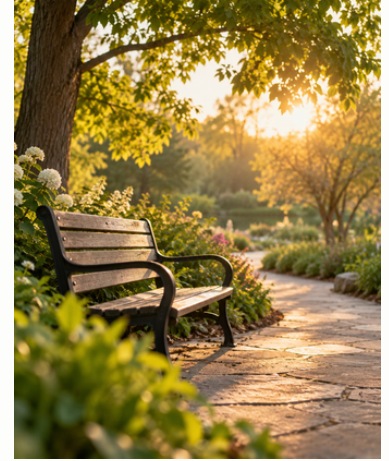


Other things to expect

Other people may not understand

Support is often strongest in the first few days after a death. People may call, visit, send messages, bring food or offer help. As time passes, other people begin returning to their usual routines while your life may still feel very different. This can be a lonely part of grief.

Even when two people are grieving the same loss, their grief can look completely different. There is no one right way to grieve.



There is no deadline for grief

There is no set amount of time you are supposed to grieve. Grief often changes over time, but that does not mean you are forgetting the person or that the loss no longer matters. You may have periods when grief feels quieter and times when it feels much stronger again. Birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, changes in your life and ordinary everyday moments can bring grief back to the surface.

Taking care of yourself while grieving

You do not have to do everything normally right now. Things that may help include:

- eating regularly when you can
- drinking enough water
- resting
- getting outside or moving your body
- writing things down
- accepting practical help
- telling people what you need
- spending time with people you feel comfortable with
- taking breaks from grief when you need them
- allowing yourself to laugh and enjoy something
- saying no when you do not have the energy

Some days, getting dressed and eating may be enough.



When to reach out for help

You do not have to wait until you are in crisis to ask for support.

Consider reaching out if:

- you feel very alone in your grief
- you do not have anyone you can talk to honestly
- grief is making everydaylife increasingly difficult
- you are struggling with school, work, parenting, caregiving or other responsibilities
- anxiety, guilt, anger or sadness feels overwhelming
- you have having ongoing difficulty sleeping or eating
- you are relying heavily on alcohol, drugs or other behaviours to cope
- your relationships are being seriously affected
- you feel unable to cope with what has happened
- you feel stuck and do not know what to do next
- you simply want someone who understands grief to talk to



When you need immediate help

Grief can be extremely painful. Sometimes a person may also reach a point where they do not feel safe. If you are thinking about suicide, harming yourself or someone else, or you feel you may not be able to keep yourself safe, seek immediate help. In Canada, call or text 988, call 911, or go to your nearest emergency department.



Seasons of Grief

provides grief support, education and planning for individuals and families before, during and after loss. You don't know the know exactly what kind of support you need before reaching out.

Free 15-minute connection call

www.seasonsofgrief.ca/connection-call