

A GENTLE GRIEF RESOURCE

Everyone Grieves Differently

Making room for different minds, cultures and relationships

Grief does not follow a timetable. Take what feels helpful, leave what does not, and return whenever you need to.

There is no correct timetable

Some people cry openly; others become busy, quiet, practical or numb. A person may grieve immediately or feel the impact months later. The depth of love cannot be measured by tears, attendance at rituals or how quickly someone returns to daily responsibilities.

Neurodivergent grief

Autistic and ADHD people may experience intense emotion, delayed processing, changes in routine, sensory overwhelm, difficulty identifying feelings or a strong need to understand every detail. Support should be clear, literal and flexible. Repeated questions may be part of processing rather than denial.

Disenfranchised and complicated losses

Grief can follow estrangement, miscarriage, infertility, adoption, divorce, job loss, migration, illness, loss of identity, the death of an ex-partner or the death of someone whose relationship was not recognised. A loss does not need public approval to be real.

Families may grieve in opposite ways

One person may want to talk while another needs silence. One may keep belongings while another wants to sort them. These differences can create conflict when everyone is already hurting. Try to describe your need without judging someone else's response.

Support the person, not an idea of grief

Ask what helps today. Offer specific practical choices and keep checking in after the early weeks. Avoid forcing meaning, comparing losses or beginning sentences with 'at least'. Presence, patience and remembering can be more valuable than perfect words.

Culture, faith and meaning

Beliefs and traditions can shape how grief is expressed, who gathers, what happens to belongings and how a person is remembered. Rituals comfort some people while others feel disconnected from them. Respectful support asks rather than assumes.

Private or unseen grief

People may hide grief because the relationship, identity or circumstances feel unsafe to disclose. Estranged relatives, carers, colleagues and people affected by suicide, addiction or traumatic death can face silence or judgement. Recognition and confidentiality matter.

Different styles at home

An action-focused person may cope through tasks while another needs conversation and closeness. Neither response is more loving. Agreeing when to talk, what to keep and who makes decisions can reduce unnecessary hurt.

Avoid comparisons

Every loss is shaped by the relationship, circumstances, previous experiences and available support. Instead of saying you know exactly how someone feels, try: 'I cannot know your exact experience, but I am here and willing to listen.'

Permission to grieve your way

You may need words, movement, creativity, solitude, information, humour, routine or professional support. Your needs can change. The aim is not to perform grief recognisably; it is to find safe ways to live with what the loss means to you.

Children and young people

Children may move rapidly between sadness and play, repeat questions or show grief through sleep, behaviour, separation anxiety or physical complaints. Use honest age-appropriate language and maintain predictable routines. Reassure them that they did not cause the death and tell them clearly who will care for them. Repeat information as often as needed.

Grief with learning or communication differences

Use concrete words, pictures, objects, social stories or familiar communication systems. Avoid euphemisms such as "gone to sleep," which can create fear or confusion. Provide extra processing time and include the person in rituals with genuine choices. Behaviour changes may communicate grief when spoken language is limited.

Loss that others minimise

The death of a pet, an online friend, a former partner, a pregnancy or someone known through care work can be deeply significant. People also grieve health, fertility, home, safety, community and future plans. Validation begins by asking what the loss meant rather than deciding whether it is important enough.

Supporting without taking over

Offer specific help while protecting choice: bring a meal, make a phone call, accompany the person or sit quietly. Continue contact after the funeral and significant dates. Do not remove belongings, arrange rituals or share news without permission. Support should return a sense of control, not take more of it away.

Conflict and boundaries in grieving families

Loss can intensify old family patterns and disagreements about funerals, money, possessions or care. Pause decisions where possible, put agreements in writing and use a neutral person for difficult conversations. Boundaries are allowed during grief. Protecting your wellbeing does not mean you loved the person less.

A gentle reminder

You do not have to carry grief perfectly. If you are struggling to manage daily life, feel persistently unsafe, or need more support than friends and family can give, speak with your GP, a bereavement service or an appropriately qualified mental health professional. In an emergency, contact emergency services.

Until next time, give yourself space to breathe.