

Grief After the Death of Someone You Love

A gentle guide for understanding and support

When life has changed because someone important has died

When someone you love dies, grief can affect far more than your emotions. It can alter sleep, concentration, appetite, confidence, routines, relationships and your sense of safety in the world. There is no correct timetable and no single way to grieve.

Understanding this kind of grief

- Grief may arrive in waves. You might feel deeply distressed one day and relatively steady the next. Neither response measures how much you loved the person.
- Numbness, disbelief, anger, guilt, relief, yearning and exhaustion can all sit alongside sadness. Mixed feelings are common, especially after a complicated relationship or a long illness.
- Anniversaries, smells, music, ordinary routines and unexpected reminders can reactivate grief. This does not mean you are going backwards.
- Many people gradually learn to carry the loss while continuing to live. The aim is not to forget or 'move on' from the person, but to find a way of living with what has changed.

A gentle reminder

You do not have to prove that your grief is serious enough to deserve care. Loss is personal. What matters is the impact it has on you.

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Therapy & support that may help

Therapy is not about taking grief away or making you forget. At its best, it gives you a safe relationship in which the loss can be spoken about, understood and carried with less isolation.

Person-centred counselling - a gentle, non-judgemental space to speak freely and make sense of your own experience.

Bereavement or grief counselling - useful when you want focused support around the death and its impact.

Support groups - being with others who have experienced bereavement can reduce isolation.

Trauma-informed therapy - worth considering when the death was sudden, frightening or involved distressing memories.

You do not have to start therapy simply because you are grieving. Some people are supported well by family, friends, community, reading or peer support. Others value professional help. Cruse Bereavement Support also offers bereavement information, helpline support, groups and one-to-one support in the UK.

When to reach for more help

Consider speaking with your GP or a qualified mental-health professional if grief is making everyday life feel persistently unmanageable, you are experiencing severe or worsening distress, trauma symptoms are dominating daily life, or you are worried about your safety. If you feel you may act on thoughts of harming yourself, seek urgent help through emergency services or a crisis service.

A few things that can help between difficult waves

- Reduce expectations on the hardest days. Grief uses physical as well as emotional energy.
- Keep basic needs visible: fluids, simple food, medication, sleep routines and fresh air where possible.
- Choose one or two safe people you can be honest with rather than feeling you must explain yourself to everyone.
- Create a small ritual of remembrance or acknowledgement if that feels right for you.
- Notice triggers and anniversaries in advance and plan extra gentleness around them.
- Allow moments of laughter, interest or rest without treating them as betrayal.

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Books I would recommend exploring

Books cannot tell you how you should grieve, but sometimes another person's words help us recognise something we have not yet been able to say ourselves.

Grief Works

Julia Samuel

A compassionate exploration of how people live through loss.

A Grief Observed

C. S. Lewis

A raw personal account of bereavement and the questions grief can bring.

The Plain Guide to Grief

John Wilson

Accessible guidance for understanding grief without forcing it into stages.

A reflection to take with you

What do I miss most today - the person themselves, the role they played in my life, or the future I expected to have with them?

From me to you

Please be gentle with yourself. Grief is not a test you pass, a set of stages you complete, or evidence that you are failing to cope. Sometimes the most helpful thing we can do is make a little more room for what is already there. You are allowed to take this one day - or one hour - at a time.

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