

Grief After Relationship Breakdown or Divorce

A gentle guide for understanding and support

When the person is still alive but the life you shared has ended

The end of a relationship can involve genuine grief. You may be grieving the person, companionship, identity, home, routines, financial security, mutual friends and the future you thought you were building. Because nobody has died, other people can sometimes underestimate the depth of this loss.

Understanding this kind of grief

- Missing someone does not automatically mean the relationship should restart. Attachment can remain even when separation is necessary.
- You may move between anger, relief, longing, fear and hope. Contradictory feelings can be part of adjusting.
- Social media, co-parenting and shared friendship groups can make emotional separation harder because reminders remain present.
- Recovery is not about erasing the relationship. It is about gradually rebuilding a life and identity that belong to you.

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.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Support Hub
www.spacetobreathetherapy.co.uk

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 - helpful for processing loss without being told what you should feel.

Relationship or separation counselling - can support understanding, communication and endings.

Family therapy - useful where children or wider family relationships are affected.

Trauma-informed therapy - appropriate when the relationship involved abuse, coercion or traumatic experiences; safety should come first.

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.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Support Hub
www.spacetobreathetherapy.co.uk

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.

Rebuilding: When Your Relationship Ends

Bruce Fisher & Robert Alberti

A practical guide to rebuilding after separation.

The Journey from Abandonment to Healing

Susan Anderson

Explores the emotional impact of rejection and abandonment.

Maybe You Should Talk to Someone

Lori Gottlieb

A warm look at therapy, change, relationships and being human.

A reflection to take with you

Which part of the relationship am I grieving most - the person, the companionship, who I was with them, or the future I had imagined?

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.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Support Hub

www.spacetobreathetherapy.co.uk