

Bereavement Grief - After Someone Dies

Understanding the different forms and experiences of grief

Understanding this form of grief

Bereavement grief follows the death of somebody important. The relationship, circumstances of the death, previous losses, practical pressures and the support around you can all influence how it feels.

There is no requirement to experience grief in a particular order or to reach a particular emotional milestone. What matters is understanding your own response, noticing what support is useful and allowing the significance of the loss to be recognised.

How it can feel

Early grief may include shock, disbelief, yearning, numbness or a sense that the person should still be there. Familiar routines can trigger automatic expectations: reaching for the phone, listening for a voice or momentarily forgetting what has happened.

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Why this grief can be difficult

Over time many people find that the intensity changes and comes in waves. Continuing to remember, talk about or feel connected to somebody who has died does not mean that a person has failed to adapt.

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What may help

Anniversaries, birthdays, music, smells and ordinary events may bring grief close again even years later. A returning wave is not the same as going backwards.

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Emotional and physical effects

Grief can affect sleep, appetite, energy, concentration, memory, digestion, muscle tension and anxiety as well as mood. New, severe, persistent or worrying physical symptoms should be medically checked rather than automatically attributed to grief.

Supporting yourself

Keep expectations realistic. Simple food, drinks, rest, daylight, manageable movement, written reminders and practical help can reduce pressure. Connection can help, but time alone can also be important. There is no single coping strategy that suits everybody.

Therapy and additional support

Not everyone needs counselling. Person-centred or bereavement counselling can provide a place to talk without being hurried. A GP can help if grief, depression, anxiety, trauma symptoms or physical problems are substantially affecting daily life. Where a death was traumatic, trauma-focused work should be undertaken with an appropriately qualified practitioner when suitable.

A Message From Me

Grief is not a test you have to pass. Different losses create different experiences, and two people can live through the same event and grieve in completely different ways. I hope this guide helps you put words around what you are carrying and reminds you that you do not have to force your grief into somebody else's timetable.

Books and places for support

Grief Works - Julia Samuel
The Grieving Brain - Mary-Frances O'Connor
It's OK That You're Not OK - Megan Devine
The Plain Guide to Grief - John Wilson

Cruse Bereavement Support
NHS grief, bereavement and loss information
Samaritans: 116 123
Space to Breathe Therapy - Support Hub

With warmth,

Maggie

Space to Breathe Therapy