

Delayed Grief - When Feelings Come Later

Understanding the different forms and experiences of grief

Understanding this form of grief

Not everybody experiences intense emotion immediately after a loss. Practical responsibilities, shock, caring for others, work or simply the mind's protective responses can mean that grief feels distant at first.

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

Strong feelings may emerge weeks, months or even years later, sometimes after life becomes quieter or another event triggers memories. This does not mean the grief is false or that the person handled the loss incorrectly.

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Why this grief can be difficult

Delayed grief may be confusing because other people may assume the person has already 'moved on'. The person themselves may not immediately connect current emotions with an earlier loss.

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What may help

Making room for the feelings now, rather than criticising their timing, can be an important part of understanding what the loss means.

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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