

When Grief Has No Off Switch

Why grief can follow you into every part of the day

Understanding what may be happening

Grief can appear at work, at bedtime, while driving, during social occasions and in moments that used to feel restful. Practical reminders may be everywhere, while the mind may replay memories, questions or imagined conversations.

It is understandable to want a break. Wanting an hour in which grief is not at the centre of attention does not mean wanting to forget the person, relationship or life that was lost.

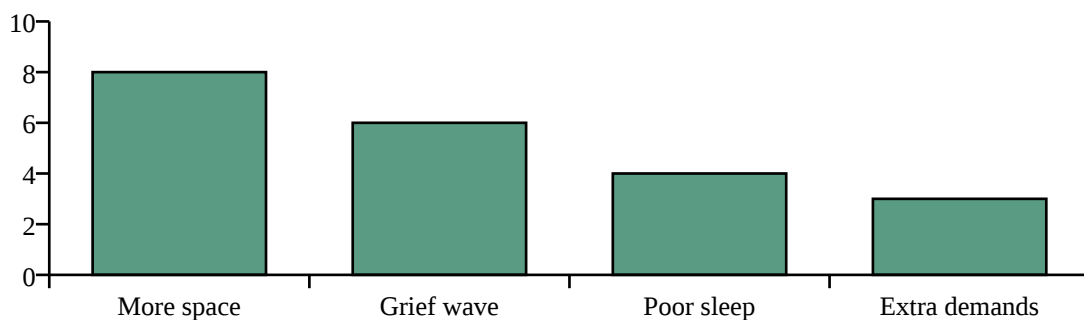
Coaching can help create small restorative pauses and reduce the guilt that sometimes appears when comfort, laughter or absorption in another activity briefly arrives.

Common experiences

- Thoughts returning at bedtime
- Feeling unable to enjoy anything without guilt
- Constant reminders around the home
- Using every quiet moment to revisit the loss
- Feeling guilty after laughing
- Fear that distraction means forgetting

A useful way to think about capacity

Illustrative coaching scale - not measured clinical data



This graph is an illustrative coaching tool rather than a clinical measurement. It shows how available capacity can reduce when several demands overlap. The purpose is to help you plan from the capacity you actually have, not the capacity you think you should have.

What can make this harder

Can add pressure	May be more supportive
• Testing whether you are 'still grieving enough' • Filling every moment to avoid emotion • Expecting a complete mental switch-off • Judging moments of pleasure	• Create intentional short pauses • Use absorbing but gentle activities • Keep a notebook for thoughts that can wait • Allow laughter and connection • Create a remembrance ritual rather than carrying every reminder all day • Balance alone time and supportive contact

A worked coaching example

If a thought arrives while you are trying to rest, write it in a notebook with the phrase 'I can return to this.'
This is not dismissal; it gives the thought somewhere to be held.

Try the STOP - SORT - SUPPORT method

STOP	SORT	SUPPORT
Pause long enough to notice what is actually happening rather than immediately pushing through.	Separate what needs action now, what can wait and what is an emotion rather than a task.	Choose one form of support: rest, a reminder, company, practical help, a professional conversation or a boundary.

Reflection & coaching questions

Use these gently. You do not need to answer them all. One useful answer is enough for a session or a difficult day.

- Where do I get even a few minutes of emotional breathing space?
- What absorbs me without exhausting me?
- What makes me feel guilty about taking a break?
- Could a remembrance ritual create a safer place for some of these thoughts?
- What would a compassionate pause look like?

My personal check-in

What I notice	What I need	My smallest next step

A one-week experiment

Choose one adjustment from this guide and try it for seven days. Keep the experiment deliberately small. At the end of the week, ask: Did this reduce pressure? Did it make something easier to begin? Did it protect energy? If it did not help, that is useful information too - choose a different adjustment rather than treating it as failure.

Books & further resources

Books can offer language, companionship and different ways of understanding grief. You do not need to read them from beginning to end. A chapter or a few pages may be enough.

- **Finding Meaning** - David Kessler
- **Resilient Grieving** - Lucy Hone
- **Continuing Bonds** - Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman & Steven Nickman

Further support

Cruse Bereavement Support offers bereavement information and support. **NHS** guidance includes information on grief after bereavement and other significant losses. **Samaritans** provides confidential emotional support on 116 123, day or night.

When extra support may be useful

Consider speaking with a GP, therapist, bereavement service or another appropriate professional if grief is having a persistent or severe effect on daily life, if anxiety or low mood is becoming difficult to manage, if physical symptoms concern you, or if you feel unable to stay safe. In an immediate emergency, seek urgent help.

A final coaching thought

The aim is not to make grief small. It is to make the demands around grief more manageable, so you have a little more room to live alongside what has happened.