

Moving Through Grief



Feeling better won't happen overnight. At first, it may be all you can do just to get through the day. But there is hope. Know that you will feel better with time, as long as you let yourself grieve. You need to grieve in order to heal. It hurts, but it's a normal part of the healing process.

The first response

Your first response is often the most intense. You may cry a lot. Or you may feel a deep numbness or shock. Everyone grieves in their own way, but there are common signs of grief:

- Having intense mood swings
- Anxiety and loneliness because you aren't with your loved one, and you want to bring the person back.
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Eating too much or too little
- Having trouble thinking clearly
- Having trouble concentrating. This can include problems understanding what you read.
- Wanting to be alone all the time

For most people, these symptoms lessen within 6 to 12 months. Talk to your healthcare provider if your symptoms last longer than 12 months.

Give yourself a break

Try not to expect too much of yourself right away. It may be hard to concentrate, work, or take care of family responsibilities for a while. Give yourself more time than usual to get things done, since you may be distracted. Don't be afraid to ask for help, even with routine chores, such as paying bills and buying groceries. At first even small tasks may seem overwhelming. Take time for yourself. Do some things that you enjoy. Go for a ride in the country, or read a book. It may feel like nothing brings you joy. But know that time really does help.

Know your grief process

Let yourself feel all of your emotions and go through your grief fully. The process is full of ups and downs. One day you may feel a lot better. The next day, you may cry again. Your response is influenced by your personal feelings, your cultural background, family, spiritual beliefs, and community. Try not to think: "I should be over this by now." There are no "shoulds" or defined stages to grief. Let yourself mourn your loss as long as you need to. Remember the good times you had with your loved one. It might help to think of ways you dealt with a loss in the past. That way grief won't seem so scary and overwhelming. Talk with your healthcare provider if you are concerned about your grief process.

Resources

- [CaringInfo](#). This program from the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization offers information about coping with loss.
- [National Institute on Aging \(NIA\)](#). NIA offers free information about grief. Contact their information center by phone at 800-222-2225 or by email at niaic@nia.nih.gov.

- [The Compassionate Friends](#). This is a self-help organization offering support to families who have experienced the death of a child. Local support group information is available.
- [National Alliance for Children's Grief \(NACG\)](#). NACG raises awareness about the needs of children and teens who are grieving a death. NACG can also help you locate support in your area.

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