

- ✓ Consider ways to honor the loss. Have a memorial. Create a legacy of honor. Do community service.
- ✓ Remember, you're not alone. Others might want to be there for you but not know what to do, so ask for—and be specific about—what you need.

KEEP IN MIND

Moving forward into a “new normal” is the key to coping with grief. But remember, everyone's timetable is different and you don't have to navigate your loss alone. If you need help, look into grief groups, find a counselor or therapist, or talk to your religious leaders.



Coping with Grief and Loss
Health & Wellness

Coping with Grief and Loss

The chance that you will experience some kind of loss during your lifetime is 100 percent.

Have you faced the death of a loved one or pet, seen a marriage or job crumble, or watched your health or finances diminish?

Anything we deem valuable has the capacity for loss. And grief is an emotional response to that loss.

Two people experiencing the same loss might react very differently depending on who or what is lost. Some people also engage in anticipatory grief—as a means of self-protection and preparation—before an actual loss.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO GRIEF

- sleeplessness
- weight loss or gain
- a weakened immune system
- sadness
- guilt
- fear
- anxiety or relief
- peace or even happiness

THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

While everyone grieves differently, there are five common stages observed by psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross that include:

- **Denial.** Refusal to accept reality, where emotions are often temporarily shut down or numbed.
- **Anger.** Anything from frustration to rage, directed internally or outwardly toward others.

- **Bargaining.** A scenario of negotiation, often in the form of religion and the promise of a reformed lifestyle, that can include unhealthy compromise.
- **Depression.** Extreme sadness and loss of hope that may lead to frequent crying or detachment, where basic life functions might seem difficult and unimportant.
- **Acceptance.** A “coming to terms” with the loss that leads to an ability to continue to enjoy life and find meaning in goals and relationships.

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF

Grieving is an intensely personal experience. Some people adjust quickly. Others take several months or years, especially if the loss has changed their daily lives or came as a shock or trauma. Here are some common misconceptions about grief:

- If you just ignore the loss, the pain will go away.
- It’s important to stay strong at all times.
- Tears are directly proportionate to the level of loss.
- After one year, a person should be completely over all aspects of the loss.

WAYS TO COPE WITH GRIEF

- ✓ Stay connected. Keep talking about what happened and don’t isolate.
- ✓ Realize that emotions are normal. Give yourself permission to feel all your feelings (good or bad) without guilt.
- ✓ Never apologize for taking care of yourself. Good hygiene, nutrition, exercise, and sleep can work wonders.