



Grief & Loss

Definitions

- **Grieving** – the internal experience of processing loss. This can be physical, emotional, or psychological.
- **Mourning** – the outward expression of loss, typically death. This may include gatherings with friends and family, religious traditions, or other rituals.
- **Anticipatory Grief** – the distress a person feels in anticipation of the loss of a loved one.
- **Complicated Grief** – a prolonged state of grief, leaving someone unable to adapt to the loss.
- **Disenfranchised Grief** – the experience of having one’s grief devalued, stigmatized, or unable to be openly mourned.

Grief is a natural response to loss. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to grieve. It’s unique to each individual and takes time to process. Understanding grief’s common symptoms and feelings can help us manage our grief and support others.

Symptoms & Feelings of Grief

Our feelings are important. We need to give ourselves, and others, permission to express grief. When in mourning, we may want to avoid, deny, or ignore painful feelings. This common response may be helpful initially, but grief cannot be avoided forever. Unprocessed grief can lead to physical or emotional illness.

EMOTIONAL:

- Denial
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Shock
- Sadness
- Yearning
- Anger
- Guilt

PHYSICAL:

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Lowered immunity
- Loss of appetite
- Weight loss/gain
- Pain or aches
- Difficulty sleeping
- Forgetfulness

PSYCHOLOGICAL: *(may require professional help)*

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Chronic fatigue
- Thoughts of suicide

If you are concerned about these symptoms in yourself or others, get connected to free, 24/7 support from a trained counselor at the 988 Lifeline. Call or text **9-8-8**, or visit **988lifeline.org**.



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Examples of Losses

While death is a common cause of grief, other losses can result in grief symptoms, including:

- Losing a job or opportunity
- Ending an important relationship (i.e., divorce, friendship, family)
- Losing sense of safety (i.e., theft, trauma)
- Losing independence through disability
- Watching someone you care for struggle with physical or behavioral health challenges

Helping Others

- Reach out by calling or send a card, text, or invitation to get together.
- Listen and allow for feelings to be expressed without giving advice.
- Remain neutral and avoid judgement.
- Encourage self-care and professional help when needed.
- Be patient and sensitive.

Coping Techniques

- Take time to process your loss and name your feelings.
- Express and accept your feelings through talking, journaling, and sharing memories.
- Avoid major life changes.
- Take care of your physical health through exercise, proper nutrition, and rest.
- Engage in creative activities like art, music, or hobbies.
- Prepare for difficult days by connecting with your support network.
- Celebrate the person's life through rituals and incorporate their memory into traditions.
- Seek support from faith-based groups with similar values or beliefs.
- Join a support group with others who have experienced similar losses.
- Seek professional help if experiencing symptoms of depression, suicidal thoughts, or anxiety.

Resources

Get connected to free, 24/7 support from a trained counselor at the 988 Lifeline. Call or text **9-8-8**, or visit **988lifeline.org**.

The Maryland Department of Health's Behavioral Health Administration has compiled resources to help individuals find support for grief and loss.



Your employer may offer assistance through an Employee Assistance Program, which provides free resources and support.