

# WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING MAY BE GRIEF



## *What is grief?*

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. Often, the pain of loss can feel overwhelming. You may experience all kinds of difficult and unexpected emotions, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. The pain of grief can also disrupt your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think straight.

You may associate grieving with the death of a loved one— which is accurate — but any loss can cause grief.

Even subtle losses in life can trigger a sense of grief. For example, you might grieve after moving away from home, graduating from college, or changing jobs. Whatever your loss, it's personal to you, so don't feel ashamed about how you feel, or believe that it's somehow only appropriate to grieve for certain things. Whatever the cause of your grief, though, there are healthy ways to cope with the pain that, in time, can ease your sadness and help you come to terms with your loss, find new meaning, and eventually move on with your life.

## *Types of grief*

1. **DIVORCE OR  
RELATIONSHIP  
BREAKUP**
2. **LOSS OF HEALTH**
3. **LOSING A JOB**
4. **LOSS OF  
FINANCIAL  
STABILITY**
5. **A MISCARRIAGE  
OR ABORTION**
6. **RETIREMENT**
7. **DEATH OF A PET**
8. **LOSS OF A  
CHERISHED  
DREAM**
9. **A LOVED ONE'S  
SERIOUS ILLNESS**
10. **LOSS OF A  
FRIENDSHIP**
11. **LOSS OF SAFETY  
AFTER A TRAUMA**

## *The five stages of grief*

**Denial:** "This can't be happening to me."

**Anger:** "Why is this happening? Who is to blame?"

**Bargaining:** "Make this not happen, and in return I will \_\_\_\_."

**Depression:** "I'm too sad to do anything."

**Acceptance:** "I'm at peace with what happened."

"However, not everyone who grieves goes through all of these stages—and that's okay. Contrary to popular belief, you do not have to go through each stage in order to heal. In fact, some people resolve their grief without going through any of these stages. And if you do go through these stages of grief, you probably won't experience them in a neat, sequential order, so don't worry about what you "should" be feeling or which stage you're supposed to be in.

## *Emotional symptoms of grief*

**Shock and disbelief.** Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth.

**Sadness.** Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness.

**Guilt.** You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. You may also feel guilty about certain feelings (e.g. feeling relieved when the person died after a long, difficult illness).

**Anger.** Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry with yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you.

**Fear.** A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, of facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.



We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical problems, including:

- **Fatigue**
- **Nausea**
- **Lowered immunity**
- **Weight loss or gain**
- **Aches and pains**
- **Insomnia**