

# How to cope with grief/loss

## What is grief?

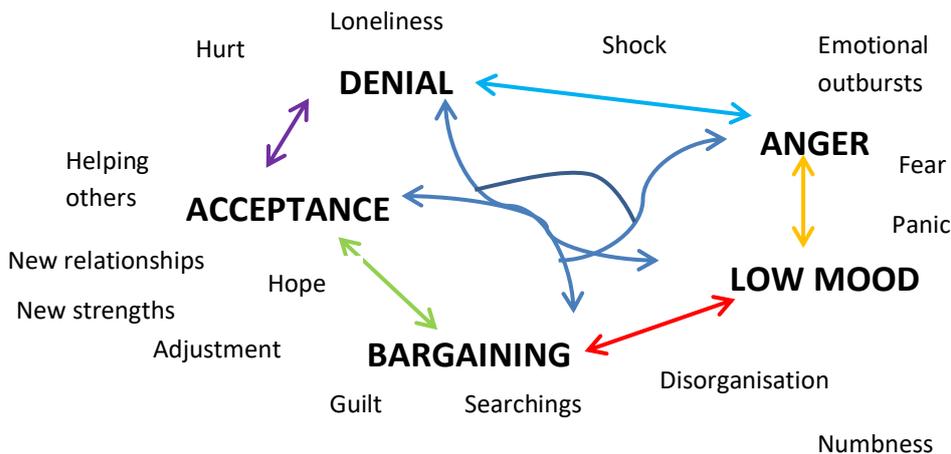
Grief is a natural reaction we have in response to death or loss. Grief can affect our body, mind and emotions. Grief is also the name we give to the process of coping with the loss of someone or something.

You might be grieving because of:

- the death of a family member, like a parent, grandparent or sibling
- the death of a friend, or someone you knew at school
- a change in a relationship with a friend or romantic partner
- an illness of someone close to you, like cancer or dementia
- the loss of a relationship, like someone moving away or no longer being in your life regularly
- the loss or death of a pet animal



## 5 phases of grieving



**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 \_\_\_."

**Low mood symptoms:** "I'm too sad to do anything."

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

People might notice or show grief in several ways:

**Physical reactions:** These might be things like changes in appetite or sleep, an upset stomach, chest pains, crying, tense muscles, difficulty relaxing, low energy, restlessness, or poor concentration levels.

**Frequent thoughts:** These may be happy memories of the person who died/left, worries or regrets, or thoughts of what life will be like without that person/companion now.

**Strong emotions:** sadness, anger, guilt, despair, relief, love, hope, shock, panic, abandonment, anxious, worried, relieved, numb.

**Spiritual reactions:** This might mean finding strength in faith in religion, questioning religious beliefs, or discovering spiritual meaning and connections.

### Remember, there is no right or wrong way to grieve.

The way you grieve might be influenced by many factors like your culture, beliefs, or how your family understands loss.

How you react might be different from how other people around you react. Feelings associated with grief may be very intense, especially in the early days and weeks. Time eventually helps these emotions pass or lower the intensity of them. However, it could be that you might not feel anything for a while and may experience delayed grief.

There might also be some occasions when you expect it, like when you experience one of many 'firsts', such as your first birthday without that person. These feelings may catch you off-guard sometimes too. Grief can present itself at any time.

## Working through grief/loss

Getting over grief doesn't mean forgetting about who or what you have lost. It is ok not to feel guilty about starting to feel better and through the process of grief, finding ways to remember what we gave lost and adjust to life without them helps us move forward.

### - Talking about your grief

- This is an important part of getting through loss. Choosing who to talk to about your feelings is a very personal decision. Sometimes the most unlikely person can offer the most support. If you've lost a family member, someone else in your family may also be useful to open up to because they're likely to understand how you're feeling. A close friend can be a good listener and a source of comfort and support, even if they haven't gone through this themselves. There may also be a staff member in school you feel comfortable to share your feelings of grief with.



### - Looking after yourself

- **Eating well** – you may lose your appetite, but try to keep eating as normally as you can: your body needs food, even if you don't want it; ideally, go for healthy, well-balanced meals
- **Getting a good night's sleep** – it can be hard to sleep when you're very upset, but there are some things that can help **\*Check out our page on sleeping difficulties and relaxation\***
- **Socialising** – seeing your friends and keeping up a social life may help take your mind off things and allow you to talk about how you're coping if you want to, but don't feel guilty about not thinking about what it is that you've lost or having a good time with friends
- **Exercising** – regular exercise can make you feel good and help with sleep; it can also be a relief to focus on something physical when you're going through a difficult emotional time
- **Avoiding smoking, drinking and taking drugs** – you may feel like smoking or drinking because you feel low, but they'll end up making you feel worse

### - Time

- Give yourself as much time as you need! Grief follows its own schedule

## Some useful websites and apps

### Cruse

Cruse is the leading national charity for bereaved people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

They have lots of great information on their website plus a telephone helpline and online webchat. Be mindful that there may be a charge when calling.

<https://www.cruse.org.uk>

### YoungMinds Crisis

#### Messenger

You can text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free, 24/7 support.

<https://youngminds.org.uk/fi>  
[nd-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/#how-does-it-work?](https://youngminds.org.uk/fi/nd-help/get-urgent-help/youngminds-crisis-messenger/#how-does-it-work?)

### Winston's wish

Support children and young people after the death of a parent or sibling.

<https://www.winstonswish.org>