



There is no right or wrong way to grieve after a loss.

∞ Grief is . . .

- The normal response of sorrow and emotions, thoughts and behaviors that follow the loss of someone or something important to you
- A natural part of life
- A typical reaction to death, divorce, illness, job loss, a move away from family and friends or any life-changing experience
- Very personal—it is different for everyone—there is no right or wrong way to grieve

∞ Grief reactions may include. . .

- Feeling empty and numb, as if you are in a state of shock
- Physical responses such as nausea, trouble breathing, crying, confusion, lack of energy, dry mouth, or changes in sleeping and eating patterns
- Anger—at a situation, a person or in general
- Guilt about what you did or did not do
- Withdrawal from family, friends and common activities
- Difficulty focusing, working or making decisions
- Questions about faith or spirituality; challenges to the meaning, value and purpose you find in life

∞ Grief lasts . . .

- As long as it takes to adjust to the changes in your life after your loss
- For months, or even years. Grief has no timetable; thoughts, emotions, behaviors and other responses may come and go

National Hospice and Palliative Care
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Experiencing Grief

It is important to experience all of the thoughts and emotions that come up, as painful as they may be, and to treat yourself with patience and kindness.

Talk about your loss

Take the time to talk to family, friends or a counselor. You can also find support by joining a hospice or community support group. Let them know you need to share your memories and express your sadness.

Forgive yourself

For everything you believe you should have said or done. Also forgive yourself for emotions such as anger, guilt or embarrassment you may feel while grieving.

Eat well and exercise

Grief is exhausting. It is important to maintain a balanced diet and rest. Exercise is also important to keep up your energy. Find a routine that you enjoy – clear your mind and refresh your body.

Indulge yourself

Take naps, read a good book, listen to your favorite music, go to a ball game, rent a movie. Do something that is fun, distracting and that you find comforting.

Prepare for holidays and anniversaries

Many people feel especially “blue” during these periods, and anniversary dates (of important family celebrations, a diagnosis, death) can be especially hard. Even when you have moved forward in your grief, whom you feel comfortable. Plan activities that give you an opportunity to mark these important times. These dates may bring back some painful feelings. Make plans to be with friends and family members with whom you feel comfortable. Plan activities that give you an opportunity to mark these important times.

How will I know when I'm finished grieving?

After a loss, you may be overwhelmed by the grief reactions you are experiencing. In time, you will learn to adjust to living with your loss. Eventually, you will start to draw comfort rather than experience pain from the memories. In a sense, you are never “finished grieving.” With a loss, there will always be moments when you will remember the loss and you may experience moments when your grief is “triggered.”

*There is no right way to grieve. It is an individual process.
Life won't be the same after a loss, but experiencing your grief
will allow you to adjust to life after loss.*

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