



Whether you've lost someone close to you or experienced a big life change, grief can be one of the hardest things to navigate. Grief can be lifelong. It doesn't follow a linear timeline, so be kind to yourself and don't have expectations of "I should be over this by now."

WHAT IS THE GRIEF CYCLE?

One way to understand grief is through the "grief cycle." This includes five stages: **Denial**, **Bargaining**, **Anger**, **Sadness**, and **Acceptance**. You don't just "level up" and move on to the next one. You might find yourself cycling through them, jumping back and forth, or feeling like you're stuck in one for a while.

Some you may experience, and some you may not. All of this is normal. **Healing isn't a straight path—it's more like a rollercoaster with lots of twists and turns.**



The Five Stages of Grief

1. DENIAL

This is your brain's way of saying, "*Whoa, this is too much to handle right now.*" It's that moment when you think, "*This can't be real.*"

It's a **protective mechanism**, giving you time to absorb what's happened at a pace you can handle.



2. BARGAINING

Ever find yourself thinking, "If only I had done this differently...?" "If this happens, I promise I'll..." That's bargaining.

It's a way to **regain some sense of control** or to make sense of what happened. It's like trying to rewrite the past in your head, hoping it'll change the present.

3. ANGER

Anger can show up in unexpected ways. You might be mad at yourself, others, or even at the universe. And that's okay. Anger is a **natural response** to feeling helpless or out of control. It's a way of trying to **reclaim some power** in a situation where you feel powerless.





4. SADNESS

This is what most people think of when they hear "grief." It's the **heavy, sinking feeling of loss**. It can make you want to curl up in bed all day or avoid anything that reminds you of what you've lost.

And while it feels endless, it's a sign that **you're processing what's happened**.

5. ACCEPTANCE

Now, don't get this confused with "being okay" with what happened. Acceptance doesn't mean you're okay with it. It means you're beginning to find a way to live with this **new reality**. It's when you start to see a future, even if it's a future that looks different from what you had in mind.



GRIEF DOESN'T HAVE A DEADLINE

You might hear people say, "Aren't you over that yet?" but **grief doesn't come with an expiration date**.

You might grieve for years, and that's okay. It's like a wound that heals over time but leaves a scar. It changes you, and that's part of the process.

GRIEF IS LOVE WITH NO PLACE TO GO

You loved someone or something deeply, and now that love feels lost.

But the truth is, that **love still exists—it's just looking for a new way to express itself**.

And that's where the healing starts.



If grief is becoming too much, consider...

SUPPORT GROUPS

- **Local Support Groups:** Many communities offer in-person support groups where you can share your experiences and hear from others going through similar losses.
- **Online Support Groups:** Websites like GriefShare, The Compassionate Friends, and Reddit have online forums where you can connect with others. This can be a good option if you're not ready to talk face-to-face or prefer the anonymity of online spaces.
- **Specialized Groups:** Remember, grief is not the same experience for everyone. Someone who has been anticipating losing an older relative may not have the same experience as someone who suddenly lost a child in a tragic accident or lost a parent to suicide. There are specialized groups out there for different experiences.

THERAPY AND COUNSELING

- **Individual Therapy:** Working with a therapist can help you process your emotions in a safe space. Ask your provider for therapists who specialize in grief.
- **Group Therapy:** Some therapists offer group sessions focused on grief, providing a structured environment to share and learn from others. There are even retreats that can help you get away from the world and connect with others in similar situations.
- **School or Campus Counselors:** If you're a student, check if your school offers counseling services. Many campuses have resources specifically for grief support.

WAYS TO HONOR YOUR LOVED ONE

- **Memory Boxes:** Collect items that remind you of your loved one and keep them in a special box.
- **Scrapbooks:** This is a way to look at photos and remember them. Only do this when you're ready.
- **Acts of Kindness:** Sometimes doing something in memory of your loved one, like volunteering or donating to a cause they cared about, can bring a sense of peace.

IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL NUMB?

Yes, it's completely normal to feel numb during grief. This numbness can feel like you're just going through the motions, or like you're disconnected from your emotions and the world around you. It's actually a common part of the grieving process.

This emotional numbness can serve as a protective mechanism. When something really painful happens, like losing someone or experiencing a major life change, your brain sometimes tries to protect you from being overwhelmed by something so devastating.

For some people, this numbness might show up right after the loss, like an emotional anesthesia. For others, it might hit later, especially after the initial shock has worn off. It can also come and go, which can be confusing, but it's a normal part of how our minds process intense emotions.

If you're feeling numb:

- **Give Yourself Time:** It's okay to not feel much right now. It doesn't mean you don't care or that you're not grieving "the right way." Your emotions might come in waves, and that's part of the process.
- **Small Steps:** Sometimes engaging in simple, routine activities can help you feel more connected. Things like taking a walk, listening to music, or even just sitting outside can be grounding.
- **Talk to Someone:** Even if you don't feel much like talking, connecting with a friend, family member, or therapist can provide a space to express what you're going through, even if it's just saying, "I feel numb."
- **Check-In With Yourself:** Journaling or art can be ways to express yourself and begin to let internalized emotions out.

CAN GRIEF AFFECT SLEEP?

Grief can have a significant impact on your sleep, and it's actually quite common to experience sleep disturbances when you're grieving.

This can show up in different ways, like trouble falling asleep, waking up in the middle of the night, or even sleeping more than usual. Here's what you might experience:

- **Insomnia:** Your mind might be racing with thoughts or memories, making it hard to wind down and fall asleep. This can lead to tossing and turning for hours or waking up frequently during the night.
- **Oversleeping:** On the flip side, grief can make you feel emotionally and physically exhausted, leading to sleeping much more than usual. This can be your body's way of trying to shut down and escape from the intense emotions.
- **Disturbing Dreams or Nightmares:** It's also possible to have vivid dreams or nightmares related to your loss, which can interrupt your sleep and leave you feeling unsettled.
- **Restless Sleep:** Even if you're getting some hours of sleep, it might not feel restful. You could be waking up feeling groggy and not refreshed.
- **Waking up Crying:** This is a common experience during grief – especially if you lost someone that you shared a bed or home with.

Coping with Sleep Issues During Grief



CREATE A ROUTINE

Establishing a **regular sleep schedule** can help signal to your body that it's time to wind down. Going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends, can create some consistency. If it helps to make a new routine that is separate from the one you had with your loved one, this may be beneficial.

LIMIT STIMULANTS

Try to **avoid caffeine and alcohol close to bedtime**. While alcohol might make you feel sleepy initially, it can actually disrupt your sleep cycle.

CREATE A RELAXING BEDTIME RITUAL

Engaging in **calming activities before bed** can help your mind and body prepare for sleep. This could be reading a book, taking a warm bath, or practicing some gentle yoga or deep breathing exercises.



LIMIT SCREEN TIME

The blue light from screens can interfere with your body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Try to **avoid screens** for at least an hour before bed. Instead, opt for activities that help you relax.

CONSIDER A COMFORT OBJECT

If you've lost someone, it might help to have a **comfort object**, like a piece of their clothing or a special item, nearby. It can bring a sense of closeness and security that might ease some of the anxiety that comes up at night.



REACH OUT

Sometimes, sleep disturbances can be a sign that you need a bit more support. A **therapist** or **provider** can help with alternative options to sleep if the regular things aren't working.



Sleep and grief are deeply connected. Your body and mind are processing a lot, and it's okay if sleep isn't perfect right now. Being gentle with yourself and trying different strategies can help you find a bit more rest during this tough time.

IS CRYING EVERY DAY NORMAL?

Yes, crying every day while grieving is completely normal. Grief is an intense emotional experience, and crying is one of the ways our bodies and minds release that built-up tension and pain.

Why Crying Happens:

- **Emotional Release:** Crying is a way for your body to release the overwhelming emotions that come with grief. It can be a form of emotional expression when words aren't enough.
- **Processing Loss:** Each time you cry, it can be a part of the process of coming to terms with the reality of the loss. It might be triggered by a memory, a thought, or even something small that reminds you of what you've lost.
- **Physical Relief:** Crying can actually help reduce stress by releasing certain chemicals in the body, like endorphins, that can make you feel a little better afterward.

THE FREQUENCY OF CRYING

Everyone grieves differently, and there's no "normal" amount of crying. Some people cry daily for weeks or even years, while others might cry less often. The frequency of crying can change over time; it might be intense at first and then become less frequent as you continue to process your grief. But it can also come in waves—you might feel fine one day and then be overwhelmed with tears the next.

Coping with Daily Crying

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION

It's okay to cry. Let yourself feel what you're feeling without judgment.

CREATE A SAFE SPACE

Find a place where you feel comfortable letting your emotions out, whether it's in your room before bed, in the shower, or during a walk.

TALK TO SOMEONE

Sharing your feelings with a friend, family member, or therapist can provide comfort and reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed.

FIND SMALL COMFORTS

Sometimes, having a comforting item like a blanket, listening to calming music, or having a warm drink can help soothe you after a crying spell.

REMEMBER

Grieving can bring up a wide range of emotions, and some days might be harder than others. Remember, it's okay to have good days and bad days, or even just moments within each day that feel different. The process isn't linear, and it's not about "moving on" but finding a way to carry your loss with you while still finding meaning and moments of joy in life.

