

It may help to remember that the thoughts and feelings will come and go as you try to come to terms with grief while also living your day-to-day life.

- Grief is a process and it takes time.
- Everyone's grief is different and unique.
- There is no right way to grieve.
- Strong emotions and thoughts are part of grief.

How long does grieving take?

There is no set time for grief. Grieving can change during your life, with some feelings coming back many times. You may feel grief stronger around important dates like anniversaries and birthdays. You will find that your grief lessens and eases over time. That does not mean that you are over your grief but that you are finding a way to live without the person that died.

What may help?

- Seek out accurate information about grief and loss.
- Be patient and gentle with yourself as you grieve.
- Acknowledge the extent of your loss.
- Allow yourself to cope and to grieve in a way that suits you.
- Try to sleep well, eat well and take gentle exercise.
- Accept emotional and practical support from friends and family.
- Try not to make major or rash decisions while you grieve.
- Talk to your GP if you feel you need further support.

Prolonged Grief

When the symptoms of grief remain very intense and get in the way of everyday life, this is called Prolonged Grief (sometimes known as Complicated Grief). This is only considered when someone has been bereaved for at least six months.

Useful Resources

www.hse.ie/grief

Further suggested reading is available from our Thérèse Brady Library, library@hospicefoundation.ie

Bereavement & Loss Hub

www.bereaved.ie

Bereavement Support Line

Freephone 1800 80 70 77. Available Monday to Friday, 10am-1pm. In partnership with the HSE.

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Registered 114617 CHY6830. Registered 20013554

A joint initiative by HSE and IHF in response to COVID 19.



Bereavement Leaflets 1. Reviewed May 2022



Understanding Grief



We experience grief after a major loss or change in our lives. It is natural and important to grieve while we process the loss or change. Restrictions during COVID-19 made it more difficult for many of us to grieve. The restrictions may also have made us grieve differently.

There are many types of losses:

- health
- job
- marriage breakdown
- home
- death

We have different ways of reacting to and coping with a loss. For most of us the death of someone close will be the biggest loss we face. Your grieving process is to try to make sense of what has happened while learning to live your life without that person.

This doesn't mean that we put the loss behind us, but we now have to adjust to a life without that person or thing that meant so much to us. For most of us the death of someone close will be the biggest loss we face.



What to expect

We are all novices when it comes to grief and there is no right way to grieve. No two people's reactions will be the same, but these are some you might have.

Feelings

You may feel sad, numb, irritable, angry, relieved, guilty, lonely, depressed, frightened or helpless. These feelings can come and go and don't follow any order.

Physical symptoms

You may feel more tired than usual, yet find it hard to sleep. It's normal to have very vivid dreams. Your appetite may change and energy levels may be low. You might find it hard to concentrate, be absent-minded or have difficulty taking in new information.

Thoughts

You may spend a lot of time thinking about the loss and the events leading up to it. It's normal to spend time thinking about 'if only' and how things might have been different. Many people find they think a lot about why it happened. You may briefly forget the person has died, particularly when you wake up. You may imagine you see or have contact with the person who died. These thoughts can be overwhelming or frightening at times. The emotions and physical symptoms of grief can lead you to wonder if you are grieving the 'right' way. These are all signs of grieving.

Social changes

You may find you need time alone or you may feel a need to tell the story of your loss many times. You may seek out people who can understand your need to talk and distance yourself from people who are uncomfortable with this. You may be disappointed and surprised at who can and who cannot support you.

Spiritual struggles

You may struggle with questions about the meaning of life, your relationship with God and your beliefs about what happens after death.

Although it may be difficult to imagine in the early days of grief, as time goes on you will find the resources and strength within yourself that you didn't know you had. Even as we struggle with grief, we can learn and grow with it.

The grief process

Many people experience a sense of shock and disbelief after a death. You may appear to be coping well but often feel detached and almost in a dream. This is your way of protecting yourself at first as you prepare for what lies ahead. You may be surprised that the pain increases when this numbness begins to wear off and the reality of your loss begins to sink in. As the reality comes into focus so too does the pain of your loss. You begin to notice all you have lost.

Grief doesn't happen in a set way. It's not like having the flu, where you feel very ill and then begin to feel a bit better until you finally feel your self again. The feelings and thoughts of grief come and go in waves. Sometimes you may feel you are coping quite well and then experience a burst of grief as you are reminded of your loss. It can be confusing to suddenly feel angry, for example, if you feel you've already 'gotten over' anger.