

Good Grief

Going through the emotions of loss aids in healing

Grief is a deep sadness that results from a loss, major or minor. It can last weeks, months, or years. Understanding the normal stages of grief, the passage of time, and self-care measures treat most cases of grief. Sometimes, counseling is necessary.

Stages of grief

1. Shock. You feel dazed and numb.
2. Denial and searching
 - You are in a state of disbelief.
 - You ask, “Why did this happen?” or “Why didn’t I prevent this?”
 - You look for ways to keep your loved ones or loss with you.
 - You think you see or hear the deceased person.
 - You begin to feel that the loss is real.
3. Suffering and disorganization
 - You feel guilty, anxious, depressed, lonely and afraid.
 - You may place blame on everything and everyone.
 - You may have physical symptoms such as stomachaches, headaches, constant fatigue, and/or shortness of breath.
 - You withdraw from routine and social contacts.
4. Recovery and acceptance
 - You start seeing a future instead of dwelling on the past.
 - You adjust to the reality of the loss.
 - You develop new relationships.
 - You develop a positive attitude.

Causes of grief

- A new or lost job, a promotion, demotion, or retirement.
- Relationship changes, such as divorce, or sending a child off to college.
- An illness, injury, or disability.
- The death of a family member or friend.
- Loss of property.
- Moving to a new location.

Self-care

- Eat regular meals.
- Exercise regularly.
- Express your emotions to family and friends. Don’t avoid them, especially during the holidays.
- Share and maintain memories of a lost loved one. Being reminded of the past can help with the process of coming to grips with a loss.

- Try not to make major life changes such as moving during the first year of grieving.
- Join a bereavement support group.
- Adopt a pet.
- Read self-help books about grief and death.

Action Steps

If grief is preventing you from coping on a daily basis, triggering thoughts of suicide, or causing you to overuse medication or alcohol, seek professional help.