



## GRIEF

*Information provided by Helpguide.org "Coping with Grief and Loss"*

Losing someone or something you love is very painful. After a significant loss, you may experience all kinds of difficult and surprising emotions, such as shock, anger, and guilt. Sometimes it may feel like the sadness will never let up. While these feelings can be frightening and overwhelming, they are normal reactions to loss. Accepting them as part of the grieving process and allowing yourself to feel what you feel is necessary for healing. There is no right or wrong way to grieve — but there are healthy ways to cope with the pain. **You can get through it!** Grief that is expressed and experienced has a potential for healing that eventually can strengthen and enrich life.

### **Everyone Grieves Differently**

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried – and there is no "normal" timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

**In 1969, psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross introduced what became known as the "five stages of grief."**

- 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 \_\_\_\_."
- Depression: "I'm too sad to do anything."
- Acceptance: "I'm at peace with what happened."

If you are experiencing any of these emotions following a loss, it may help to know that your reaction is natural and that you'll heal in time. However, not everyone who is grieving goes through all of these stages – and that's okay. Contrary to popular belief, **you do not have to go through each stage in order to heal.** In fact, some people resolve their grief without going through any of these stages. And if you do go through these stages of grief, you probably won't experience them in a neat, sequential order, so don't worry about what you "should" be feeling or which stage you're supposed to be in.

Kübler-Ross herself never intended for these stages to be a rigid framework that applies to everyone who mourns. In her last book before her death in 2004, she said of the five stages of grief, “They were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but **there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss**. Our grieving is as individual as our lives.

### **Common Reactions to Grief**

While loss affects people in different ways, many people experience the following symptoms when they’re grieving. Just remember that almost anything that you experience in the early stages of grief is normal – including feeling like you’re going crazy, feeling like you’re in a bad dream, or questioning your religious beliefs.

- **Shock and disbelief** – Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth. If someone you love has died, you may keep expecting them to show up, even though you know they’re gone.
- **Sadness** – Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.
- **Guilt** – You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn’t say or do. After a death, you may even feel guilty for not doing something to prevent the death, even if there was nothing more you could have done.
- **Anger** – Even if the loss was nobody’s fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry at yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you. You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice that was done to you.
- **Fear** – A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, of facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.
- **Physical symptoms** – We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical problems, including fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, and insomnia.

### **Myths and Facts about Grief**      *Source: [Center for Grief and Healing](#)*

**MYTH:** The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.

**Fact:** Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

**MYTH:** It’s important to be “be strong” in the face of loss.

**Fact:** Feeling sad, frightened or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn’t mean you are weak. You don’t need to “protect” your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

**MYTH:** If you don’t cry, it means you aren’t sorry about the loss.

**Fact:** Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it’s not the only one. Those who don’t cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

**MYTH:** Grief should last about a year.

**Fact:** There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

**MYTH:** Moving on with your life means you’re forgetting the one you lost.

**Fact:** Moving on means you’ve accepted your loved one’s death. That is not the same as forgetting. You can create a new life and still keep your loved ones memory a part of you.

**MYTH:** Friends can help by not bringing up the subject.

**Fact:** People who are grieving usually want and need to talk about their loss. Bringing up the subject can make it easier to talk about.