

What is Grief?

Very simply, grief is the response to learning about a loss or change. There is no typical amount of time that a person will grieve the loss of a loved one. Also, if your relationship with your loved one was complicated, this may add another layer to the grief process. Everyone's path is different, but most people will recover from their grief over time if they have the support of friends and family and healthy habits for processing their grief.

The American Psychological Association. (<https://www.apa.org/topics/families/grief>) offers some strategies to help process grief:

Talk about the death of your loved one with friends or colleagues in order to help you understand what happened and remember your friend or family member. Avoidance can lead to isolation and will disrupt the healing process with your support systems.

Accept your feelings. You may experience a wide range of emotions from sadness, anger or even exhaustion. All of these feelings are normal and it's important to recognize when you are feeling this way. If you feel stuck or overwhelmed by these emotions, it may be helpful to talk with a licensed psychologist or other mental health professional who can help you cope with your feelings and find ways to get back on track.

Take care of yourself and your family. Eating healthy foods, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep can help your physical and emotional health. The grieving process can take a toll on one's body. Make sure you check in with your loved ones and that they are taking the necessary healthy steps to maintain their health.

Reach out and help others dealing with the loss. Spending time with loved ones of the deceased can help everyone cope. Whether it's sharing stories or listening to your loved one's favorite music, these small efforts can make a big difference to some. Helping others has the added benefit of making you feel better as well.

Remember and celebrate the lives of your loved ones. Anniversaries of a lost loved one can be a difficult time for friends and family, but it can also be a time for remembrance and honoring them. It may be that you decide to collect donations to a favorite charity of the deceased, passing on a family name to a baby or planting a garden in memory. What you choose is up to you, as long as it allows you to honor that unique relationship in a way that feels right to you.

If you continue to struggle with grief for a long period of time and have a hard time doing your typical activities, then you may benefit from connecting with a psychologist or other licensed mental health professional. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, please consider calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255. Help is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

Source: American Psychological Association. (2020, January 1). Grief: Coping with the loss of your loved one. <http://www.apa.org/topics/families/grief>