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Understanding Your Grief

Grief is not a problem to solve or a condition to treat. It is a human response to loss , as natural as breathing, as individual as a fingerprint. But the world fills our heads with unhelpful ideas about how grief "should" work. The stages. The timeline. The pressure to be "done" or "better" or "moving on." Much of what we've been told about grief is wrong or incomplete.

This resource is for anyone who's lost someone or something that mattered. It unpacks common myths, describes what healthy grieving actually looks like, and offers a framework for understanding your own experience , whatever shape it takes.

OUR PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION

When Getting Out of Bed Is the Hardest Part

[T.L. Everheart](#)

A gentle, honest companion for the days when grief makes even the smallest things feel impossible. This book meets you exactly where you are , in the bedroom, under the covers, unsure how to face the world , and reminds you that you're not broken, you're grieving. No platitudes, no pressure, just quiet, steady companionship for the hardest mornings.

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The Myth of the "Stages"

You've probably heard of the "five stages of grief": denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. Here's what most people don't know: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross developed this model to describe what *dying* people experience , not what grieving people go through. It was never meant to be a roadmap for the bereaved.

Grief doesn't move in neat, orderly stages. It's more like weather , unpredictable, shifting, sometimes stormy and sometimes unexpectedly calm. You might feel:

- **Numbness** , especially early on. This isn't denial. It's your mind's way of metering out pain it can't process all at once.
- **Anger** , at the person who died, at the universe, at people who still have what you lost. This is normal and not a sign you're "stuck."
- **Deep sorrow** , waves of crying, emptiness, a physical ache in your chest. This is love with nowhere to go.
- **Moments of normalcy, even joy** , laughing at a memory, enjoying a meal. This doesn't mean you're "over it" or that you've stopped loving them. It means you're human.
- **Guilt** , for surviving, for not doing enough, for feeling okay in a single moment. Guilt is grief's persistent companion. It doesn't mean you're guilty of anything.

You can feel all of these in a single day , or none of them. You can skip "stages" entirely. There is no correct sequence, and no timeline for reaching "acceptance." The goal isn't to stop grieving. It's to learn how to carry the loss.

What Healthy Grieving Actually Looks Like

If the stages are a myth, what does healthy grief look like? Here are some signs , not that you're "doing it right," but that you're allowing grief to move through you in its own way:

You let yourself feel , or not feel

Some days you cry. Some days you feel nothing. Some days you're productive. Some days you can't get out of bed. Healthy grief doesn't look like constant sadness. It looks like allowing whatever is present to be present , without judging yourself for it. Numbness is not failure. It's protection.

You oscillate between grief and everyday life

Researchers call this the "dual process model" of grief. You move back and forth , sometimes focusing on the loss (crying, remembering, longing), sometimes focusing on restoration (work, chores, distractions). This oscillation isn't avoidance , it's how humans naturally process overwhelming experiences. Your mind takes breaks from grief because it has to.

You talk about them , or you don't

Some people need to say their person's name constantly. Others can't bear to. Neither is wrong. What matters is that you have at least one person or space where you can be honest about what you're carrying. If you don't have that person in your daily life, support groups, therapists, and online communities can fill that role.

Grief Myths to Let Go Of

"Time heals all wounds."

Time alone doesn't heal , it's what you do with the time. Grief changes shape over months and years, but it doesn't simply disappear. You don't "get over" significant loss. You integrate it. You grow around it. The weight may become more familiar, but expecting it to vanish sets you up for shame when it doesn't.

"You need to be strong."

Grief is not weakness. Crying is not weakness. Falling apart is not weakness. The pressure to "be strong" often means "don't make other people uncomfortable." That's their problem, not yours. Real strength in grief looks like honesty , admitting you're not okay, asking for help, letting yourself be seen in your pain.

"You should be over it by now."

There is no "by now." Grief has no expiration date. Anniversaries, milestones, random Tuesdays , grief can surge years later, and that's normal. Society's discomfort with ongoing grief is not a timeline you need to follow.

"Closure is the goal."

Closure is a seductive idea , the notion that you can tie up grief with a bow and move on. For many losses, especially traumatic or sudden ones, closure never comes. And that's okay. The goal isn't closure; it's learning to live alongside the absence. To carry what you've lost without being crushed by it.

Small Strategies for Hard Days

These aren't solutions , they're small, practical handholds for days when grief feels like it's swallowing you whole:

- **Breathe into the feeling.** When grief surges, try not to fight it. Place a hand on your chest. Breathe slowly. Say to yourself: "This is grief. It hurts because I loved. It will pass through me , not today, not forever, but this wave will ease."
- **Create small rituals.** Light a candle at dinner. Listen to a song that connects you to them. Walk a route you used to walk together. These tiny, intentional acts can anchor you when the ground feels unsteady.

- **Move your body , gently.** Grief lives in the body. A short walk, stretching, swaying to music, even just shaking out your hands. You're not training for anything. You're helping your body release what it's holding.
- **Write it out , messily.** You don't need a journal or beautiful prose. A scrap of paper. A notes app. Three words: "I miss them." Getting grief outside your body , onto a page, into the air , can reduce its grip, even briefly.

When Grief Needs Extra Support

Grief is not a mental illness. But sometimes grief can become complicated , when the pain is so intense or prolonged that it prevents any movement toward healing. Here are some signals that professional support might help:

- You can't function , can't eat, can't sleep, can't get out of bed , for an extended period, not just a few hard days.
- You're using alcohol, drugs, or other behaviors to numb the pain in ways that feel out of your control.
- You're having thoughts of harming yourself or joining the person who died. This is a crisis , please reach out. In the US, dial **988** for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, available 24/7 by phone or text.
- The grief feels exactly as raw and overwhelming months later as it did on day one , with no variation, no moments of relief, no gradual softening.

Seeking help is not failure. It's not weakness. It's an act of care for yourself , the same care you'd want for anyone you love who was suffering this deeply.

Gentle Prompts for Reflection

"What is one thing I believed about grief that I'm starting to question?"

"When does my grief feel most manageable , and when does it feel heaviest?"

"What is one kind thing someone has done for me since this loss?"

"What do I need to hear right now that no one is saying?"

"What would I say to someone else who is going through what I'm going through?"

A Quiet Word

Grief is not a disorder. It is not a weakness. It is the price of having loved , and it is a price that every human who has ever loved deeply has paid, in one form or another. You are not alone in this. You are not broken. You are grieving, and that is one of the most human things a person can do. Be gentle with yourself. There is no right way. There is only your way, one day at a time.

Come back to this page whenever you need to. It's here for you , no expiration, no pressure, no judgment.

Find your path

Currently in crisis?

If your grief has become a crisis, you feel unsafe, or you are thinking about harming yourself, immediate support is available.

Call or Text 988

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week anywhere in the United States, free, confidential, and ready for anyone experiencing emotional distress or grief.

If this is a life-threatening emergency, call 911 immediately.

[See all crisis resources](#) →