

# Dealing with Grief and Loss Long Term



Grief is a natural response to loss. When grieving, people experience a wide range of emotions. And they may feel surprising or difficult to explain. If you are experiencing grief, have hope. Most people can recover from loss with enough time, healthy habits and social support. It is important to understand healthy ways to cope with grief, as this is essential for your mental health.

## Time Is Healing

There is no “normal” timetable for grieving. People can have emotional reactions to grief months or even years following a loss. However, feelings of grief are strongest right after a loss. They become milder over time. If you are grieving, be patient with yourself. Know that it will get better with time.

## Healthy Habits

When you are grieving a loss, it is more critical than ever to take care of yourself both physically and mentally.

- **Physical health:** Grief can take a toll on the body. When you feel better physically, you will be better able to cope emotionally. Make sure to maintain good hygiene, get enough sleep, eat healthy food and exercise. Try to follow a basic routine of daily activities and maintain your hobbies or interests. Avoid using alcohol or drugs as a response to grief.
- **Mental health:** Look after your mental health while grieving. Take time to recognize your feelings. Accept them and express them in healthy ways such as talking to friends and family or keeping a journal. Everyone grieves in different ways. Avoid judging or criticizing yourself for how you are coping.

## Social Support

Seek support from others to help you cope with your grief and loss. This is a vital part of the healing process. Sharing your feelings can make the burden of grief easier to carry.

- **Turn to loved ones:** Even though grief makes it tempting to withdraw from others, it is important to stay connected to friends and family members. While talking about your grief and loss with loved ones can be very cathartic, it is also helpful to spend time just hanging out casually with friends and family.
- **Draw comfort from your community:** Tap into the communities you are a part of that can help you share the burden of grief. Maintain your routine with a faith community, neighborhood, book club or close group of coworkers.
- **Consider joining a support group:** To connect with others who can deeply understand and relate to your feelings, seek out a support group of people who are experiencing a similar loss.
- **Talk to a therapist or grief counselor:** If your grief feels too hard to bear, seek professional help from a therapist or counselor who specializes in grief.

It is important to recognize the difference between grief and clinical depression. Grief typically involves a rollercoaster of emotions. Negative emotions will be mixed with moments of pleasure and happiness. Depression, on the other hand, is characterized by constant feelings of emptiness and despair. Other symptoms of depression are intense feelings of guilt, thoughts of suicide, feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness, slow speech and body movements, inability to function at home/work/school, and seeing or hearing things that are not there. If you are experiencing symptoms of clinical depression, talk to a mental health professional right away.

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