

Grief Fact Sheet

Grief hurts, but it can be helpful. The process of grieving often involves sadness, anger, loneliness, and other painful emotions. However, grieving can help you come to terms with loss and move forward in life, while still cherishing memories of your loved one.

Everyone grieves differently. Although others may have opinions about how to grieve correctly, your grief is yours and yours alone. Some people need to express their grief, while others prefer to process in silence. Some feel anger, while others feel sadness, numbness, or relief. Everyone has different reactions to loss, and different needs during the grieving process.

The circumstances of a loss have a major impact on grief. Deaths that are unexpected, traumatic, or stigmatized (e.g. suicide) can complicate the grieving process. Personal factors, such as a history of mental illness, or a strained relationship with the deceased, can also contribute to difficulties.

Grief does not have a set time frame. Grief can last for weeks, months, or years. It may come and go around holidays, anniversaries, and major life events, or it might always be in the background. However, grief does tend to lessen in intensity over time.

Grief may contribute to other problems. Grief increases the risk of developing other health problems, mental illness, and relationship difficulties. This is especially true if the death was traumatic, if you feel guilt about the death, or if grief is prolonged.

It's okay to seek help. Support from family and friends can prevent grief from growing out of control. Although grief will improve over time for most, this isn't always the case. When grief is especially debilitating or long-lasting, support groups, therapy, and other resources may be beneficial.

Not everyone experiences significant distress. About 1 in 3 people respond to a loss with resilience or relief. Feeling this way does not mean that you don't care, or that you love the person any less. Nor does it mean that your grief is unfinished, or that you have a problem.

Moving on doesn't mean forgetting. You can continue to live your life, have new experiences, and form new relationships, while continuing to love the person you lost. The goal of grieving isn't to forget, but rather to figure out how you would like to remember, while moving forward.