

"When will I get over my grief?"

Our response to grief is very individual. Most bereavement counsellors say that it takes one to five years to come to terms with any significant loss.

"Sometimes I feel as though I am not with it."

"Am I going mad?" No, grieving is a very intense process and it is not uncommon for a grieving person to find themselves "off the air" for a few seconds or minutes.

"How will I know whether I am stuck in my grief?"

You have to remember that grief is an individual process. As a general guideline, if you are having particular difficulty for between three and six months, it might be useful to seek some professional assistance.

"I want to talk to mum about my feelings but I don't want to upset her."

Your wishing to speak to your friends or family about what has happened will not make them feel upset. They are already feeling upset and talking about your feelings may help both of you.

"If I do not experience all aspects of grief, does that mean I'm not doing it right?"

No, grief is different for all people. You can skip steps or go back to earlier steps.

Who to contact for further help...

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Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement

Ph: Freecall 1800 642 066 or Ph: 9265 2100

Kids Helpline

Ph: 1800 551 800

Beyondblue

Ph: 1300 224 636 or Ph: 9810 6100

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

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**Understanding...
Grief and Loss**

Dare to be excellent.

What is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss and is the process by which we adjust to and accept the changed circumstances brought about by our loss. Loss is part of every day life; from moving schools, changing family circumstances to have a pet die or the saddest; having some-one we love die. Most people will encounter all kinds of loss in their lives and therefore suffer grief.

Why does it hurt so much?

The first time we experience loss is usually a very significant time in our lives. While the individual feelings of grief are not new, when grief and loss occur, the feelings all seem to mix together to make us feel something we've never felt before, something we are unable to forget quickly.

Things to do for yourself...

- Accept and express your emotions as a necessary part of the grief process.
- Avoid major life changes early in grief, especially within the first year.
- Don't be afraid to cry. Crying is a natural reaction for all people. It's the body's way of releasing endorphins (natural pain relief to help deal with shock).
- Avoid the use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Don't expect to get over it overnight.
- Try to eat, sleep and exercise normally.

- Share with others who are experiencing or have experienced loss. Consider a support group.
- Don't forget that children grieve differently from adults. If you feel you are unable to support them, let someone you trust talk to them.
- Routine is a great stabiliser and helps you get through the day.
- Stick to what is important and necessary now.
- Grief can be a lonely process. Reach out and let appropriate people know you need support. Friends are important.
- Don't be afraid to seek counselling - you are not going crazy.

Things you can do to help a grieving person...

- Allow the bereaved to talk about their loss and grief. Listen when they want to talk. Ask them if they would like to talk but allow them to refuse or express themselves in their own particular way.
- Recognise that everyone is different and will grieve in their own way.
- Allow the bereaved to express their feelings without fear of judgement or condemnation.
- Be honest with your own feelings. If you don't know what to say or do, admit it.
- Don't use unhelpful clichés eg "I know how you feel."
- Provide support but allow the bereaved to do what they feel able to do. Offer practical assistance.

Grief responses...

- **Feelings** - anxiety, fear, sadness, anger.
- **Thoughts** - disbelief, confusion, worry, hallucinations, inadequacy.
- **Physical** - hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the chest and throat, over sensitivity to noise, a sense of feeling left out, feeling tired or a lack of energy, breathlessness.
- **Behavioural** - crying, sighing, restlessness and over-activity, absentmindedness, social withdrawal, visiting places and carrying objects of significance.

The journey through grief...

- **Shock** - can't believe what has happened and confused about why it has happened.
- **Denial** - don't believe it could have happened to your family.
- **Really upset** - feel heart-broken and want to cry for a long time.
- **Really sad** - feel gloomy and heavy-hearted, still crying at times.
- **Feel alone** - feel like nobody else has had the same experience or knows how you feel.
- **Guilty** - you think you may have caused it somehow, or could have prevented it.
- **Angry** - you hate what has happened and hate the world.
- **Wishing** - you begin to remember only the good things and wish they would come back.
- **Getting back to normal** - sometimes you feel okay.
- **Acceptance** - while not happy about it, you realise it has happened and can't be undone.
- **Getting on** - life does go on for everyone and you can feel happy again.