

What is Loss and Grief?

Feelings of loss and grief can occur after losing someone or something that you care about. This may be the death of a loved one or the loss of a relationship, a job, your health, your possessions or your way of life. When we lose someone or something that is very important to us, it can take time to adjust and to learn to live our life without that person, thing or way of life.

Loss and grief is a normal part of life that everyone experiences at some point. How we experience grief and loss depends on a range of factors, including who or what we have lost, our personality, our past history and upbringing, our cultural heritage, our spiritual beliefs, our current circumstances and our social support network.

How does loss and grief affect wellbeing?

Everyone grieves differently and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. People are different in how long their grief lasts and their reactions to the loss. Some typical reactions include:

- Feeling sad or down, frequent crying
- Shock, denial or feeling “numb”
- Feeling stressed, anxious, exhausted or confused
- Anger, guilt, shame, blame or relief
- Feeling lonely, isolated or withdrawn
- Not feeling yourself or acting differently than usual
- Physical health problems – headaches, change in eating habits or sleeping patterns
- Difficulties concentrating, making mistakes at work or school
- Not enjoying your normal activities or hobbies
- Difficulties or tension in personal relationships – loved ones may cope differently with the loss
- Increased alcohol, smoking or drug use
- Feeling hopeless or like you can’t go on, thoughts of suicide or self-harm.

All these reactions to grief are common and you may experience different emotions and reactions at different times.

What helps?

Let yourself grieve – it's important to express your feelings, rather than bottling them up. Share your feelings with a trusted family member, friend or health professional. Alternatively, express your emotions in another way, such as through physical activity, listening to or playing music, writing a journal, praying or meditating, painting/drawing or engaging in cultural ceremonies or rituals to say goodbye.

Take care of yourself – grief can be physically and emotionally draining. Remember to take care of yourself by eating healthily, doing regular exercise and getting enough sleep. When you feel ready, try to get back into your normal routine. Avoid alcohol and drugs, as they can numb your feelings and make it harder to heal.

Take your time – when you lose someone or something important, it takes time to get back into life. There isn't a set time limit on grief, so try not to put pressure on yourself or others to "move on" or "get over it". Avoid making any big decisions until you are able to think more clearly.

Let others help – it can be hard to accept help from family and friends. Sometimes they don't know how to support you during this difficult time. Explain how you're feeling and what others can do to help. It may be emotional support or helping with more practical things, like cooking, running errands or looking after children.

Do things you enjoy – it's important to take "time out" from your grief to enjoy life and have fun. Even when you're feeling down, try to regularly connect with family and friends and get involved in activities that you enjoy. This will help you to stay healthy and assist in the healing process.



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Find out more

Call Lifeline – **13 11 14** if you need to speak to someone about your feelings of loss and grief. Visit www.lifeline.org.au to find a range of self-help resources and information.

Alternatively, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement www.grief.org.au and the National Association for Grief and Loss (NALAG) www.nalag.org.au can provide additional information about support and assistance.

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