

Understanding Grief

Grief is a normal and natural response to the loss of someone or something important to you. Adjusting to the absence of someone or something we love is painful. This loss can cause us to question many things, experience a spectrum of emotions, and respond in ways we can't foresee. This is because you're human and something awful has happened.

Grief lasts longer than most of us expect. Research tells us that it takes anywhere from 18-24 months for a person to adjust to a major loss. This can be longer or shorter depending on the relationship, and whether the death was sudden or traumatic. The most important thing to know is that no specific amount of time is correct or better than another.

There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Each of us has our own style of grieving that can be informed by our family of origin, culture, religion, and previous experiences of loss. Sometimes it is more private, reserved for a special time and place. Other times it is more expressive, crying and hugging with friends and family. Listen to what you need and how you feel most comfortable grieving.

Formal support from counseling or support groups may be needed in order to help us through our grief. The most helpful thing for grieving people is to be able to talk about the loss. The process of grieving is helped as we connect the thoughts in our mind with the feelings in our heart. Friends and family may be able to assist; the key is to find someone who will listen without judgment. If you need more support, reach out for help.

Grieving well doesn't mean forgetting. It doesn't mean "moving on" and "getting over it." Death causes a change in relationships; it doesn't end them. Grieving well means finding ways to remember the person we lost and move forward in life with their memory.