

Understanding Grief

Grief is a normal process that occurs in response to the loss of someone or something. The loss may involve:

- The death of a loved one
- The loss of a relationship, job, much-anticipated opportunity, life goal, or sense of security
- Life-threatening illness
- A move to a new community

It's human to react to losses with a variety of emotions, including sadness, anger, shock, and numbness, and there is no time limit for how long these emotions may last. Grief is a highly individual process. It impacts each individual differently.

Stages of Grief

1. **Denial** – You will probably react to learning of the loss with numbness and disbelief. You may deny the loss at some level to protect yourself from the pain.
2. **Anger** – The pain of the loss may cause you to feel angry towards yourself or others.
3. **Bargaining** – You may try to bargain with a higher power or others to avoid the cause of your grief.
4. **Depression** – Loss causes sadness because you are realizing the magnitude of your loss.
5. **Acceptance** – Acceptance does not mean instant happiness. You are still in the grieving process. Acceptance merely means that you have accepted the loss and are finding ways to move forward in life.

Some Symptoms of Grief

- low energy or exhaustion
- changes in appetite
- sadness/depression
- headaches
- stomachaches
- isolation
- anxiety

Factors that hinder the healing process

- Avoidance or minimization of your emotions
- Use of alcohol or drugs to self-medicate
- Use of work, schoolwork, or constant socializing to avoid feelings

Ways to move towards healing

- Confide in good friends, family members, and/or a personal counselor
- Allow time to experience, acknowledge, and accept your thoughts and feelings
- Meditate, pray, cry, write in a journal, go for a run ----- Do things that help you
- Tell those around you what helps you and what doesn't
- Expect and accept some reduction in your usual efficiency and consistency
- Remember that there is no deadline for being over your grief