



Grief & loss

What is grief?

Grief is what happens when you lose someone or something important to you. Its personal and everyone grieves differently. Our culture, gender, age, past experiences of loss, and our belief systems shape the way we manage grief and loss.

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss. It can affect every part of your life; your emotions, thoughts and behaviour, beliefs, physical health, your sense of self and identity, and your relationships with others.

Changes to feelings

You might feel some or all of these things:



- Shock
- Disbelief
- Pain
- Sadness
- Longing
- Anger
- Resentment
- Regret
- Guilt
- Abandonment
- Anxiety

Changes to thoughts

It can be hard not to think about the loss all the time. You might find it difficult to focus and concentrate.

Some people find it hard to care as much about other things. It can feel like nothing matters. Some people might think that the world doesn't make sense anymore, and they can't figure out their place in it.

Physical changes

Your mind and your body are closely connected, so grief can have a big impact on your body too, such as

- Headaches
- Body aches
- Weight changes
- Sleep disturbance
- Changes to appetite or eating
- Tiredness
- Feeling sick or rundown



Changes in what you do

It can be hard to find the energy to keep up with day-to-day life. Some people might not want to see their family or friends or do things they used to enjoy. Other people find that keeping extra busy helps them get through the day.



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How long does it last?



Grief has no set pattern. It's hard to know how long grief will last because everyone is different. Some people may grieve for

weeks and months, while others may describe their grief lasting for years.

It's important to know that eventually, things will get easier and won't hurt as much. It might be helpful to think of grief like the ocean. Sometimes the power of the ocean is so strong you can feel out of control. Other times it feels more manageable, and you can drift and float with the waves.

Grief isn't depression. However, it's important to know that grief can leave you vulnerable to experiencing depression. During tough times, some people can turn to alcohol or other drugs to try and get through. This might feel helpful at the time, but it can create other problems in the long run. If you're not sure what's happening for you, it can be helpful to reach out for support.

What can you do?

Grief and everything that comes with it can be really intense. It takes time to work through. If you've experienced loss, there are things you can do.

Healthy Habits. Try to eat well, cut back on alcohol and other drugs, and get a good night's sleep. Setting yourself small, easier goals can help keep up your motivation. Grieving can be exhausting so it's important to keep healthy habits.

Activity. Doing stuff can be one of the best ways to help life improve, even when you might not feel like doing anything. Find something that works for you like playing or listening to music, walking or a sport, watching a movie, or hanging out with family or friends. Playing outside with the dog can do wonders!

Honour your loss. It might be by writing a journal of memories, writing letters, treasuring precious possessions, planting a tree or flowers, writing a song; whatever feels meaningful to you.

Take it easy on yourself. Being kind to yourself is always a good idea, but it's even more important when you're having a tough time. Remind yourself that grief hurts, it's hard, and it takes time to heal. Feeling confused, overwhelmed, angry or anything else and being upset is OK.

Talk about it. Though it can be hard reaching out to others, it can help you feel supported and less alone. Whether you're speaking to a family member, a trusted friend, or a Counsellor, it's up to you what you feel comfortable sharing. You might just want to say you're having a tough time.



Getting Support

Taking that first step can be tough, but if you are experiencing mental health difficulties, it's important that you reach out. You can also get in touch with your GP or use our online or phone-based service by calling **1300 327 624** or emailing mhwb@ruralaid.org.au

If you ever feel unable to cope because of overwhelming or intense emotions, or if you have any thoughts of harming yourself, then ask for help immediately or call **000** or speak to someone at **Lifeline (13 11 14)**