

# Understanding Grief

## 1 Grief: What Is It?

Grief is the emotional response to losing something meaningful — not only through death, but through change, disconnection, uncertainty, identity shifts, and unmet hopes.

## 3 Common Experiences

- brain fog
- fatigue
- emotional waves
- numbness
- irritability
- sleep disruption
- difficulty concentrating
- longing
- guilt
- avoidance
- physical heaviness
- heightened sensitivity
- relief/conflicting emotions

Responses to grief can vary widely and it is common to experience contradictory emotions simultaneously.

## 6 Grief Does Not Move in a Straight Line

Grief often revisits us in layers. Certain dates, places, changes, memories, or transitions may reactivate emotions long after a loss occurred.

## 2 Grief Can Follow Many Types of Losses

- death and bereavement
- relationship loss
- identity loss
- health changes
- chronic illness/disability
- life transitions
- infertility/pregnancy loss
- trauma and safety loss
- estrangement
- addiction in family systems
- loss of future plans
- moving/community loss
- role changes
- aging
- burnout and functional loss

## 4 Grief is Often Misunderstood

### Myth

### Reality

Grief only happens after death.

Many forms of loss create grief.

Grief follows stages in order.

Grief is nonlinear.

Time automatically heals grief.

Support and meaning matter.

Grief is only sadness.

Grief can involve anger, numbness, anxiety, exhaustion, relief, confusion.

Moving forward means forgetting.

People often continue bonds and memories.

This combats shame beautifully.

## 5 6 Self-Support Tools for Grief

1. **Rest Your Body:** Grief causes deep physical exhaustion. Let yourself slow down, take breaks, and sleep without feeling guilty.
2. **Honor One Memory:** Build a tiny, daily habit to remember your loss. Light a candle for 5 minutes, look at one specific photo, or listen to a favorite song. This gives your grief an intentional place to go.
3. **Express the Pain:** Get the feelings out of your body. Cry when you need to, write things down, or talk out loud to a trusted friend.
4. **Focus on “Right Now”:** Thinking about the future can feel overwhelming. Focus only on the next hour or the next single step in front of you.
5. **Say “No” to Extra Tasks:** Your energy is limited right now. Protect your peace by stepping back from draining chores & busy social events.
6. **Keep One Small Routine:** Keep just one thing exactly the same every day – like a morning cup of tea or a short walk – to help you feel grounded.