

What is Grief?

Grief is a normal part of dealing with loss. It is the suffering a person goes through when someone or something that they love is taken away. Most people think of grief after the death of a loved one, but people also have feelings of grief after all kinds of losses. Some of these losses might include:

- Loss of a pet.
- Loss of a job.
- Loss of a friendship.
- Loss of health.
- Loss of financial security.
- A miscarriage.
- A family member's serious illness.
- Loss of feeling safe after a trauma.
- Loss of a dream or long held goal.
- Children leaving home.

The amount of pain a person feels will depend on how important the loss was to the person grieving.

Everyone grieves differently, but there are stages

1. **Shock or Denial** – Many times when people first experience the loss they feel numb. They may not believe what they are going through is really happening.
2. **Pain or Guilt** – When the shock wears off, people often feel extreme emotional pain. The pain may feel unbearable. Sometimes people feel guilty about things they did or did not do. Life may seem unreal or very scary during this time.
3. **Anger or Bargaining** – Feeling very mad about the loss is common. People also sometimes say they will make changes in their life if the painful loss will go away.
4. **Sadness, depression, and loneliness** – These feelings may come around the time that other people think you should be feeling better and moving on. You may focus on things from the past or how things used to be. Memories may make you feel very sad and lonely.
5. **The upward turn** – Life seems to feel more normal again. Things seem calmer and more organized again. You may begin to feel a little less sad.
6. **Rebuilding** – As you begin to feel less sad you begin to focus on solving problems and adjusting to life without the person or way it used to be.
7. **Acceptance and hope** – You start to accept your new situation. You may not feel happy, but you start to feel hope that you can go on with life and move forward.

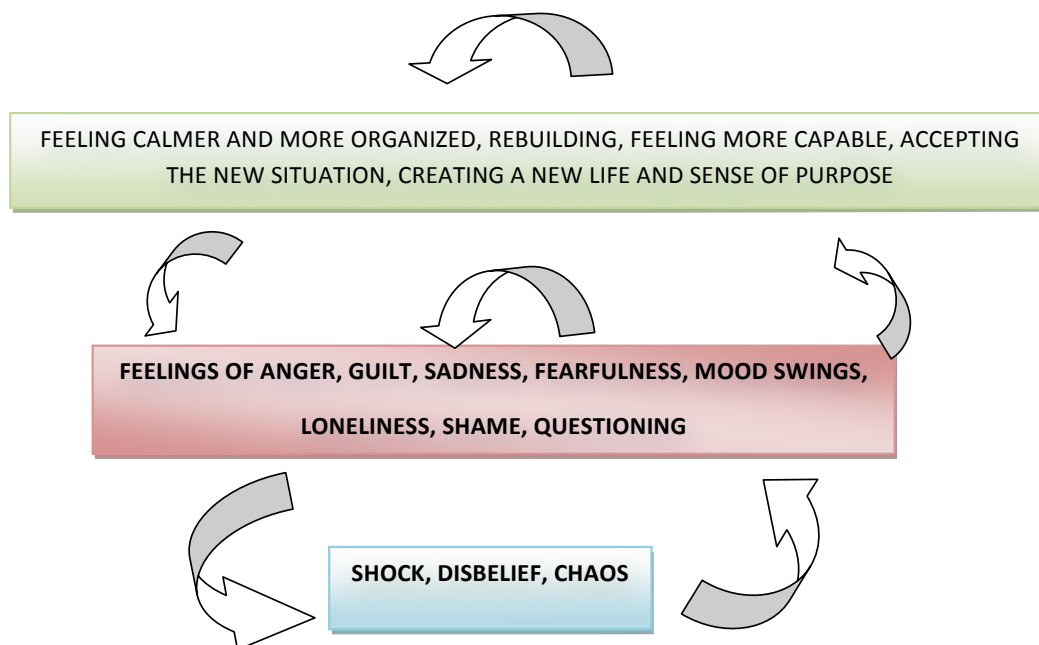
Other Symptoms of Grief

- **Physical symptoms** – Tiredness, weight loss or gain, aches and pains, difficulty sleeping.
- **Fearfulness** – Increased worries, feelings of helplessness, panic attacks.

How long does grieving take?

Everyone is different and there is no set time for going through grieving. It is important to let yourself feel all of the feelings that are a part of grieving for you. A person doesn't have to go through all of the stages of grief listed above. You might only go through a couple of the stages. You also might go through several stages more than once before you accept the loss. It may take from several weeks to several years depending on the type of loss.

Grief does not follow a straight path. You might want to think of it as a spiral through the different stages.



Compiled from the following sources:

Kubler-Ross, E. (1996). On death and dying. New York: Macmillian

www.grief-healing-support.com

www.HELPGUIDE.org

www.Recover-from-grief.com