

When to seek professional help for grief:

If you recognize any of the above symptoms of complicated grief or clinical depression, talk to a mental health professional right away. Left untreated, complicated grief and depression can lead to significant emotional damage, life-threatening health problems, and even suicide. But treatment can help you get better

Contact a grief counselor or professional therapist if you:

- Feel like life isn't worth living
- Wish you had died with your loved one
- Blame yourself for the loss or for failing to prevent it
- Feel numb and disconnected from others for more than a few weeks
- Are having difficulty trusting others since your loss
- Are unable to perform your normal daily activities

Bring Your Life into Balance

Feeling overwhelmed by sadness, anger, loneliness, guilt, or other painful emotions? This toolkit can help you get through the grieving process and regain your emotional balance.

Funded by: St. Michael's Centre Foundation
www.stmcfoundation.ca
Direct line: 604-244-1646



What is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. You may associate grief with the death of a loved one - and this type of loss does often cause the most intense grief. But any loss can cause grief, including:

- A relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- Loss of financial stability
- A miscarriage
- Loss of a friendship
- Death of a pet
- Loss of a cherished dream
- A loved one's serious illness
- Loss of safety after a trauma

The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief. However, even subtle losses can lead to grief. For example, you might experience grief after moving away from home, graduating from college, changing jobs, selling your family home, or retiring from a career you loved.

Everyone grieves differently

Grieving is a personal and highly individual experience. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and the nature of the loss. The grieving process takes time.

Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried - and **there is no "normal" timetable for grieving**. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months. For others, the grieving process is measured in years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

Myths and Facts about Grief

MYTH: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.

Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

MYTH: It's important to be "be strong" in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to "protect" your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

MYTH: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.

Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.

MYTH: Grief should last about a year.

Fact: There is no right or wrong time frame for grieving. How long it takes can differ from person to person.

Coping with grief and loss - Tip 1: Get support

- Turn to friends and family members
- Draw comfort from your faith
- Join a support group
- Talk to a therapist or grief counselor

Coping with grief and loss - Tip 2: Take care of yourself

- Face your feelings.
- Express your feelings in a tangible or creative way.
- Look after your physical health.
- Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, and don't tell yourself how to feel either. Plan ahead for grief "triggers"- Anniversaries, holidays, and milestones can reawaken memories and feelings. Be prepared for an emotional wallop, and know that it's completely normal. If you're sharing a holiday or lifecycle event with other relatives, talk to them ahead of time about their expectations and agree on strategies to honor the person you loved.

How to support a grieving person:

If someone you care about has suffered a loss, you can help them heal by asking about their feelings, spending time just being with them, and listening when they want to talk.