

Grief and You

Grief is our response to loss. It is acutely painful, both emotionally and physically, and can last anywhere from a few days to years. No two grieving processes are going to look the same, it is an intensely individual response. Even in the case of one person, one experience of grief can look completely different from the next.

It's important to remember as well that grief isn't just about the loss of a loved one. We can feel grief when someone we had a complicated relationship with passes, when we end a relationship (romantic or friendship), and even when we lose things like our job, our house, and our sense of self after trauma.

Here are some tips to move through and hold space for your grief:

- 1. Remember that grief is an essential part of the healing process.** Grief moves at its own pace. Don't try to speed it up or slow it down based on your expectation of what it should look like. Trust that in time, the grief will move through you, and give yourself permission to ride the waves of grief until then. Now is not the time to seek closure. Now is the time to heal.
- 2. Set boundaries around your plans.** If you don't feel up to visiting and catching up, don't. Keep in mind that it can feel supportive to have one or two trusted people to lean on, but this does not have to be the case for your whole family and social group. Thank them for thinking of you and then let it go.
- 3. Find time to be alone.** While you're setting those boundaries, make sure that you're also carving out time to be by yourself if you live with other people. This can be as simple as going for a walk or a drive, anything where you have a period of time to be silent and have space to think. You can't pour from an empty cup, so make sure that you're giving yourself the time you need to recharge.
- 4. Control what you can.** There are many experiences that will be outside of your control when something unexpectedly reminds you of who or what you've lost. If you know ahead of time that something is going to be painful and do not feel like you have the capacity to handle the pain, don't go. Trust your gut and prioritize your well-being. There will be time to make up for missed engagements later.
- 5. Honour your memories and emotions.** Whether it's lighting a candle each night or drinking a mug of their favourite tea, try to spend time with your memories. Many different emotions can come up, let yourself feel all of them. This is all part of the healing process.
- 6. Honour your process.** Healing happens at different paces for different people. It also can differ each time for one person. Don't let someone tell you that you need to move on if you aren't ready. Only you know what feels right to you in the moment.
- 7. Don't be afraid to move forward.** That being said, grief isn't meant to last forever. As the pain fades, it's okay (and natural) to move out of grief and into a new stage of life.
- 8. Ask for help.** You don't have to go through this alone. Don't be afraid to reach out.