

# WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT GRIEF

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*Grief is a journey we take. It is an intensely personal process. When we grieve, we rarely know what to expect, because each time we do it the grief is different. Grief will touch us all sometime in our life. Some of us will even experience it many times. Here are some things to watch for while grieving.*



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1. **Grief Takes Time:** Society generally gives us three days to grieve. However, grieving can take from a year to a few years. Each one of us grieves differently. Just do not expect grief to be a short-term affair.
2. **The pain is intense:** Pain? Oh yes, pain. Grieving is emotional pain and can manifest as physical pain. Do not be surprised by the level of the emotional pain - especially if you have never grieved intensely before in your life.
3. **Go through the pain:** No one can cheat the grieving process. You cannot go around the pain, you cannot bargain with the pain, you can only feel it and go through it. Look at the grief head on and realize the sooner you face it the sooner you will have gone through the process.
4. **Expect different emotions:** Grief is a mixture of emotions. These emotions will materialize at different times and in different combinations. Some of the emotions you may feel are, sadness, anger, guilt, confusion, emptiness, numbness, and despair. You may even feel that you are losing your mind.
5. **Watch for Depression:** Grieving is normal when a loss has occurred. Depression is a chemical change in the brain. If you are crying all the time, can't get out of bed or complete the basic functions of living, please see a doctor or a therapist right away to determine if you are depressed. If you are suicidal go to the Emergency Room or call 911 as soon as possible.
6. **Greet the tears:** They will bring healing. Let your tears flow either when you are alone or in public. Crying is a natural outlet of grief. Do not apologize.
7. **Grieving takes strength:** Grieving takes most, if not all, of your strength. Do not worry if you do not have as much energy as you did before your loss. Scale back and only do the things that are necessary. Don't feel guilty about doing less.
8. **Triggering events:** Anniversaries, holidays, birthdays, places, objects and people may all trigger memories surrounding your loss. Be prepared for the grief to gush forth again during these times.
9. **Grief changes you:** Grief is transforming. The process of grieving makes a person change who they are emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. It is okay to change. Just be aware it might happen. Embrace the change rather than fight it.
10. **Others will be at a loss:** Grief is something that is not discussed easily. People have no clue how to discuss death or your personal loss. Tell friends and family specifically what you need and want during this period of grief. They will be thankful and so will you.
11. **Be aware of scheduling changes:** Life will not be normal and routines may need to be different. Try to keep as much structure as possible in your life and minimize the amount of change.
12. **Grief brings the opportunity for growth:** Look for it. Direct your thoughts forward. Grief is a healing process.