

Coping with Loss and Grief

The process of grief is personal. There is no “normal” or “right-wrong” way of coping with the feelings of loss, as each individual may experience this process in his/her own way. An individual may experience intense emotions after experiencing an expected or unexpected loss (e.g. pain, sadness, etc.). Grief can affect people emotionally, physically and mentally.

Some Examples of Initial Reactions after Experiencing a Loss:

Denial

Most people refuse to believe their loss in the beginning.

Numbness

Due to the shock of losing something or someone, people may feel as if they “feel nothing”, as if they have neither positive nor negative emotions.

Anger and Rebellion

Loss can seem unfair. People very often find it cruel and start questioning as “why”. Emotions such as anger and rebellion can be experienced intensely, especially when the loss is unexpected or untimely.

Enormous Pain

This can be experienced both physically and psychologically. Many individuals think that the pain that begins after loss will last forever.

Guilt

The “if only” scenarios are numerous. People may begin to blame themselves for the things they have or have not done/said.

Depressed Mood

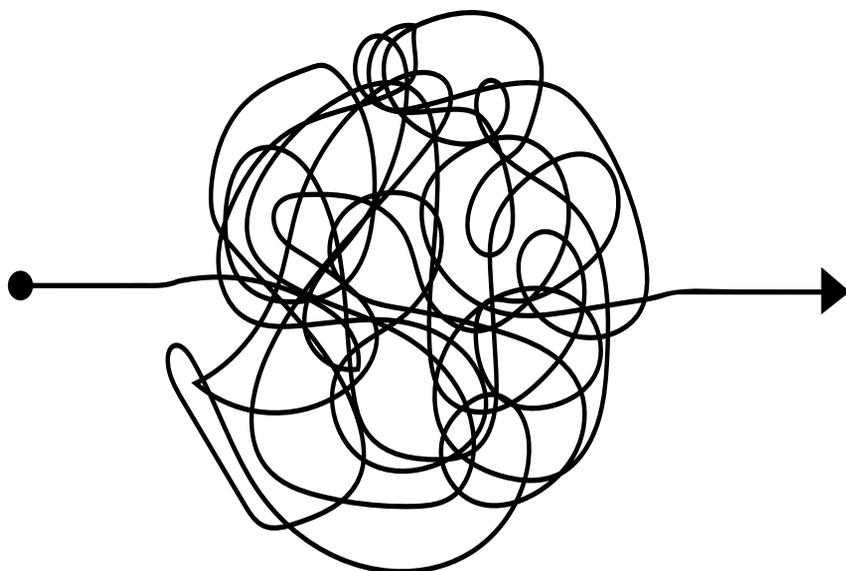
Intense sadness and hopelessness begin. Everything in life starts to be seen as meaningless.

Mood Swings

In the beginning, experiencing mood swings may seem scary, but this is actually quite normal. When upset, people may suddenly start to feel angry or cry unexpectedly when they feel upset.

Longing

It is common to have lots of thinking and dreaming over and over again about life before the loss and also an intense longing for the time before the loss.



“Vecteezy.com”

How to Cope with the Feelings after Experiencing Loss?

As aforementioned, grieving is such an individual process and the strategies for coping with this process may vary from person to person. Various factors such as age, personality traits, education level, lifestyle, and the sociocultural background can be related to experiencing grieving in various ways.

The Following Coping Strategies Can be Helpful:

- ✿ Talking to someone about the loss and sharing memories can help. Not everyone may understand you but some people will do. Besides, if people know what you are going through, it is more likely for them to understand the changes in your actions. This may also help you feel more “understood” and “accepted”.
- ✿ If you hold yourself responsible or feel guilty; to remember (or remind yourself) that it is not always possible to foresee things and that people always have their own reasons to act in a certain way can help you to ease the pain you may feel.
- ✿ Talk to people who have already gone through similar experiences with you. You may learn a lot from them.
- ✿ Cry. It is very healthy and a very important part of the grieving process.
- ✿ Write, read, paint, take photos etc. Pursuing any interest of yours may calm you down.
- ✿ Do not try to set a time limit for when your grief should end. This would stress you even more. When it comes to loss and grief, it is impossible to determine how long it will last. Characteristics and the length of time for grieving process is very personal.
- ✿ Be flexible about experiencing mood swings.
- ✿ Allow yourself to have fun and laugh. Just because you are doing these does not mean you do not care about your loss. This is just the proof that life goes on and that over time, functionality can increase and more participation in daily life can be achieved over time.

How to Support a Grieving Person?

- Approach with empathy.
- Provide a secure and warm atmosphere and encourage the grieving person to express and share his/her emotions.
- Be a good listener.
- Explain that the stress he/she is going through is completely normal.
- Encourage him/her to get professional psychological support, if needed.

