### The Grieving Process



**Grief**: The natural emotional response resulting from a significant loss—especially the death of a loved one.

Everyone deals with grief differently. People cry, laugh, busy themselves with work, throw up, or even feel numb. Some recover quickly, while others take their time. Grief is a natural healing process, and there's no "right" way to do it.

For some people, grief can become too painful. It can grow into something totally different, like depression or anxiety. Other times, grief might last far too long, and take over a person's life for years on end. This is called **complicated grief**.



"Normal" grief varies greatly between cultures, people, and situations.



Grief is a natural process, and does not always require treatment.



About 10% of people develop complicated grief after a loss.



Complicated grief can be treated with psychotherapy.

#### **Acute Grief**

Immediately after a loss, and for months afterwards, it's normal to have intense symptoms of shock, distress, sadness, poor appetite, sleep trouble, and poor concentration. These symptoms will slowly diminish with the passage of time.

### **Complicated Grief**

Sometimes, the symptoms of acute grief never seem to go away. They can last for years. The loss of a loved one continues to feel unreal and unmanageable. You might constantly yearn for the deceased, or experience guilt about the idea of "moving on" and accepting the loss.

### **Integrated Grief**

After resolving the most intense symptoms of acute or complicated grief, you will enter the lifelong stage of integrated grief. At this point, you have come to accept the reality of the loss, and you've resumed daily life activities. This doesn't mean that you miss your loved one any less, or that you don't feel pain at their memory—you've just learned how to cope. Acute grief may show itself again, especially around holidays, anniversaries, and other reminders.

# Goodbye Letter

To:	
Saying goodbye makes me feel	
You taught me	
Something I want you to know is	
I will always remember	
	From:

## The Stages of Grief

The Kübler-Ross model of grief (the five stages of grief) describes five primary responses to loss. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Someone who is grieving may go through these stages in any order, and they may return to previous stages.

Denial: "This can't be happening."

Individuals may refuse to accept the fact that a loss has occurred. They may minimize or outright deny the situation. It is suggested that loved ones and professionals be forward and honest about losses to not prolong the denial stage.

Anger: "Why is this happening to me?"

When an individual realizes that a loss has occurred, they may become angry at themselves or others. They may argue that the situation is unfair and try to place blame.

Bargaining: "I will do anything to change this."

In bargaining, the individual may try to change or delay their loss. For example, they may try to convince a partner to return after a breakup, or search for unlikely cures in the case of a terminal illness.

**Depression:** "What's the point of going on after this loss?"

At the stage of depression the individual has come to recognize that a loss has occurred or will occur. The individual may isolate themselves and spend time crying and grieving. Depression is a precursor to acceptance because the individual has come to recognize their loss.

Acceptance: "It's going to be okay."

Finally, the individual will come to accept their loss. They understand the situation logically, and they have come to terms emotionally with the situation.

## **My Stages of Grief**

Instructions: Describe how each of the stages of grief has affected you.

Denial: "This can't be happening."
Anger: "Why is this happening to me?"
Bargaining: "I will do anything to change this."
Barganing. I will do anything to change this.
Depression: "What's the point of going on after this loss?"
Acceptance: "I know what happened, and I can't change it. Now I need to cope."

## **Grief Sentence Completion**

Right now, I feel	
I feel the saddest when	
The thing I miss most about the person I lost is	
Since the loss, things have been different because	
My family usually feels	
If I could ask the person I lost one thing, I would ask	
Something I liked about the person who I lost was	
One thing I learned from the person who I lost is	