

Losing someone or something you love or care about deeply is very painful. Grief is a natural response to loss. Grieving is a process that allows you to adjust physically, emotionally, and mentally to your loss so that with time you can continue to experience a full life.

Any loss can cause grief, including:

- Relationship break-down
- Losing a job
- Loss of health
- Death of a loved one
- Loss of a friendship
- Retirement
- Miscarriage
- Death of a pet
- Loss of financial stability
- Selling the family home
- Loss of safety after a traumatic event

People experience grief differently and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Grieving takes time and the length of time an individual may grieve for varies. Some typical reactions include:

- Feeling sad or down
- Shock, denial or 'feeling numb'
- Feeling stressed, anxious, exhausted, or confused
- Anger, guilt, shame, blame, or relief
- Feeling lonely, isolated, or withdrawn
- Not feeling yourself or acting differently than usual
- Difficulties concentrating, making mistakes at work, school, or home
- Not enjoying your normal activities or hobbies
- Difficulties or tension in personal relationships
- Increased drug or alcohol use
- Feeling hopeless or like you can't go on, thoughts of suicide or self-harm
- Physical symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, aches and pains, insomnia, weight loss, or weight gain

You may experience different emotions at different times, it may feel chaotic. The grieving process is unique for each person.

Loss doesn't go away, however over time it becomes part of you, you adjust and adapt to it, you regain energy, and are able to resume living and functioning in a "life as usual" way, experiencing the usual highs and lows, familiar and daily routines, and increasingly finding enjoyment in life.

Coping with grief and loss

Let others help. It is important to connect with others. Draw loved ones close, accept the assistance that is offered by others, and actively seek out support from friends, family, workmates, doctors, support groups or counsellors. Connecting with others will help you heal.

Take your time. It takes time to feel better, both physically and emotionally, and to get back into life. Don't place pressure on yourself to "move on" or "get over it". Allow yourself time to grieve. Avoid making any big decisions until you can think more clearly.

Take care of yourself. Grief can be physically and emotionally draining. Take care of yourself by eating well, getting enough sleep, and exercising regularly. Limit alcohol and drugs; they can numb your feelings in the short term, but may not allow you to process your grief and heal.

Express your feelings. It can be helpful to schedule some time each day to focus on your feelings, write a diary, look at photographs, or simply cry. Plan for "grief" triggers, such as anniversaries, holidays, and milestones and know that it is normal to experience strong emotions at these times.

Do things you enjoy. Take "time out" from your grief to enjoy life. Even when you are feeling down try to re-introduce activities that you enjoy, and allow yourself to enjoy them. A good balance of focusing on your grief and finding time to re-introduce enjoyment is important for your health and the healing process.

The sadness from a loss never goes away completely, however if the pain of your loss is so intense that it is keeping you from resuming your life with time, then seek help.

If you are concerned about a friend or family member who has experienced loss and is grieving – look for signs that they are not coping, talk with them about what's going on, listen to their experience, and seek help together.

Further information and support

- Coping with grief and loss (Healthlink) <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>
- Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement <http://www.grief.org.au/>
- Griefline <http://griefline.org.au/>
- For support, you can contact JCU Student Equity and Wellbeing. Alternatively, you can contact your GP, other mental health professional, Lifeline on 13 11 14, or Griefline on 1300 845 745.

Student Equity and Wellbeing

James Cook University

Web <https://www.jcu.edu.au/student-equity-and-wellbeing>

Email studentwellbeing@jcu.edu.au

Phone Townsville (07) 478 14711 or Cairns (07) 423 21150

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