




Moving Forward with Grief

A Practical Psychoeducational
Guide Based on the
Dual Process Model of Grief
(Stroebe & Schut)



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Introduction

Grief is a natural and deeply human response to loss. It affects emotional wellbeing, physical health, relationships, identity, and the ability to engage in everyday life. While grief is universal, each person's experience is unique and influenced by their relationships, personal history, culture, and available supports.

Many people expect grief to follow predictable stages or to gradually fade over time. However, contemporary bereavement research shows that grief is not a linear process. Individuals often move between moments of confronting loss and moments of engaging with ongoing life responsibilities.

This resource introduces a practical understanding of grief based on the **Dual Process Model (DPM) of Grief**, which recognises that healthy adaptation involves moving between two natural experiences:

- **Loss-oriented experiences**, where attention turns toward the person who has died and the emotional impact of the loss; and
- **Restoration-oriented experiences**, where attention shifts toward adaptations to life changes, roles and daily routines.

Rather than “moving on”, people gradually learn how to **move forward while carrying the relationship and meaning of the person who has died.**



Understanding the Dual Process Model of Grief (Stroebe & Schut)

Understanding How Grief Actually Works

Grief does not move in a straight line. Many people are surprised to find that emotions change from day to day – sometimes even from hour to hour.

One moment a person may feel deeply connected to memories and sadness, and another moment they may feel focused on practical tasks or even experience moments of enjoyment. This variation is not a sign of avoidance or recovery happening “too quickly”. It is a natural and healthy process.

The **Dual Process Model of Grief** explains that people adapt to loss by moving between two types of experiences.



The Two Natural Experiences of Grief

Loss-Oriented Experiences

These moments focus on the emotional impact of the loss and the continuing bond with the person who has died.

Examples include:

- Missing the person
- Remembering shared moments
- Sadness, longing and tears
- Thinking about what has changed
- Reflecting on the relationship



These experiences allow emotional acknowledgement and connection.

Restoration-Oriented Experiences

These moments focus on adjusting to life changes and engaging with everyday responsibilities.

Examples include:

- Returning to routines
- Managing practical tasks
- Social interaction
- Learning new roles and responsibilities
- Experiencing moment of distractions or enjoyment.

These experiences support adaptation and rebuilding stability.

Healthy Grief Involves Movement Between Both

People naturally move back and forth between loss-oriented and restoration-oriented experiences. This movement is called **oscillation**.

Oscillation helps regulate emotional intensity and allow the nervous system periods of rest from grief while still maintaining connection to the loss.

Avoiding grief entirely can create emotional strain. Remaining only in grief without restoration can lead to exhaustion.

Balance emerges through gentle movement between both experiences over time.

Example of Daily Oscillation

| Time of Day | Loss-Oriented Moments | Restoration-Oriented Moments |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Morning | Brief acknowledgment or memory | Preparing for the day, routines |
| Afternoon | Quiet reflection if feelings arise | Work, school, practical tasks |
| Evening | Journaling, remembering, or talking | Rest, relaxation, connection |

Add a little bit of these moments do not need to be long or structured. Even a few minutes of acknowledgement can help emotions feel less overwhelming.



Why Small Moments Matter

When grief is given predictable space:

- Emotions often feel safer and more manageable
- Individuals experience less pressure to suppress feelings,
- Memories can be integrated without interrupting daily functioning,
- The nervous system receives periods of emotional rest.

In contrast, constant busyness without emotional acknowledgement may temporarily reduce distress but can delay adjustment over time.

Gentle Ways to Create Presence

People may choose different approaches depending on personality, culture, or family traditions.

Examples include:

- Saying the person's name in conversation,
- Sharing a memory during meals,
- Keeping a small meaningful object nearby,
- Taking a reflective walk,
- Writing one sentence about the day.

Consistency is more helpful than intensity.



For Parents and Caregivers Supporting Young People

Children and adolescents often follow the emotional tone of adults around them. When grief is acknowledged calmly and naturally, young people learn that sadness and joy can exist together safely.

Short, predictable check-ins may help:

- “What reminded you of them this week?”
- “Was there a moment you missed them today?”

These conversations do not need solutions. Listening is often enough.

Grief changes over time, but connection and meaning can remain part of everyday life.



When Grief May Need Extra Support

Grief is Different for Everyone

Most people gradually adapt to loss with the support of family, friends, community, and time. Emotional responses such as sadness, longing, anger, confusion, or temporary difficulty concentrating are common and expected.

However, grief can sometimes become heavier to carry, particularly when loss occurs alongside major life changes, caregiving stress, or limited support.

Seeking additional help is not a sign that grief is abnormal. It is a way of supporting emotional health during a significant life transition.

Signs That Additional Support May Be Helpful

A person may benefit from professional support if they experience:

- Persistent difficulty in sleeping or ongoing fatigue
- Feeling emotionally numb or disconnected from others
- Strong guilt, self-blame, or unresolved regret
- Withdrawal from relationships or usual activities
- Ongoing anxiety, irritability, or emotional overwhelm
- Difficult managing daily responsibilities over time
- Avoidance of all reminders of the person who died
- Feeling stuck or unable to move between grief and daily life

These experiences do not mean something is “wrong”. They may simply indicate that grief needs more structured support.

Understanding Vulnerability and Resilience

Grief responses are influenced by many factors, including:

- The nature of the relationship,
- Sudden or traumatic circumstances,
- Previous losses,
- Mental or physical health,
- Family and social supports,
- Developmental stage (particularly for children and adolescents).

Some individuals require only reassurance and information, while others benefit from targeted or specialist bereavement care. Matching the level of support to individual need helps promote healthier adjustment.

Support can be adjusted depending on a person’s needs at different times.



When to Consider Professional Support

Professional counselling or bereavement services may assist with:

- Anticipatory grief before a death,
- Adjustment following loss,
- Supporting children or young people,
- Navigating family changes,
- Meaning-making and remembrance,
- Anxiety or emotional distress linked to grief

Early support often prevents emotional difficulties from becoming more complex later.

Reaching Out

If you are concerned about yourself or someone else, consider speaking with:

- A GP,
- Counsellor or psychologist
- Bereavement support service,
- Community health provider

Support works best when accessed early without judgement.

Grief is not a problem to solve, but a human experience that sometimes benefits from shared support.

Moving Forward While Carrying Connection

Moving Forward with Grief

Overtime, grief often changes rather than disappears. The intensity of emotions may soften, routines gradually return, and new experiences begin to take shape. At the same time, memories, love, and connection to the person who has died can remain an important part of life.

Contemporary grief understanding recognises that maintains an ongoing internal bond with the person who has died is both normal and healthy.

Remembering, speaking about them, or continuing meaningful traditions can suit adaptation rather than prevent it.

Moving forward does not mean leaving the person behind. It means learning how their presence continues in a different way.

The relationship continues as life moves forward.



What Helps Over Time

Many people find adjustment supported by:

- Allowing emotions to change naturally,
- Maintaining connection through memories or rituals,
- Engaging gradually with daily life,
- Accepting moments of joy without guilt,
- Seeking support when needed.

Grief often becomes more integrated through repeated experiences of both remembering and living.

There is no fixed timeline. Each person's path develops at its own pace.

A Gentle Reminder

You do not need to carry grief perfectly.

Moments of sadness, relief, laughter, or uncertainty can exist together. These experiences reflect the complexity of love and loss.

Adjustment happens through small steps taken repeatedly over time.



About the Author

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Mariza supports individuals and families experiencing anticipatory grief and bereavement across community settings, with a focus on compassionate, person-centred care and grief literacy.

Use of This Resource

This guide may be used for educational and supportive purposes within community and healthcare environments with acknowledgment of the author.

This resource will continue to be refined through clinical reflection and feedback from individuals and caregivers using the guide.

Disclaimer

This resource provides general psycho education and is not a substitute for individual clinical assessment or therapeutic care. Individuals experiencing significant distress are encouraged to seek professional support.