

## **When should I start Grief Counselling?**

One of the first questions I often hear after a recent death is “when is the right time to start grief counselling?” Of course, the specific answer varies based on your personal circumstances, but let's break it down:

### **Early days after a loss**

In the first few weeks after someone you love dies, you are still in the shock phase, just trying to make it through each day with basic needs met. If you are able to take a shower and feed yourself, you are doing very well. You are probably busy with practical matters like paperwork, phone calls, and arranging for a funeral or memorial service.

The grief can be very intense during the early days of loss and you might feel like you are "going crazy." You might find your emotions are all over the place, like you are on a roller coaster ride that you just want to end. Maybe you feel a weight in your belly, or your shoulders feel tense, your chest is tight, and you find it hard to take a deep breath. Where in your body do you feel your grief? You might have returned to work or resumed previous activities on some level, but your thoughts are consumed with the loss.

At this stage, you can phone up for a free 30-minute phone consultation. You might not feel ready for formal grief therapy at this point, but just a brief phone call with a grief specialist can provide reassurance that you are on the right track.

### **2 - 11 months after a loss**

Before you know it, a month or two or six have passed and one morning you wake up thinking: how have I been able to go on living without my loved one for this long? Things have settled down enough that you are starting to notice more grief symptoms affecting your thoughts and physical health. You are having trouble concentrating at work or getting back into your previous daily routine.

### **This is the time to call a counsellor:**

- Your thoughts are consumed with your loved one or the circumstances of their death.
- You are having trouble finding motivation to tackle your daily activities more days than not.
- You are actively avoiding any reminders of the person who died
- You have nagging physical symptoms that you did not have prior to the death: stomach aches, headaches, interrupted sleep, nightmares
- You feel like there is no point in living anymore without the person who died.
- You have increased your alcohol consumption or are relying on increased doses of medication to function or sleep.

You don't have someone you trust to talk to about the person who died, someone who will support you unconditionally and guide you through the roughest patches of grief. Often family members are also grieving, so they can't offer the support you need.

If you are experiencing any of these signs, call me today so we can talk about it. You might just need a few sessions to make sure your grief process is on track for healing. Unfortunately, we can't just make grief go away faster or skip over the pain to get to the healing. But with the right support, the grief journey can be much smoother than you think.

### One year or many years after a loss

Sometimes life gets in the way, and we don't come to terms with a loss right away. Perhaps you were so busy caring for children or an older relative, you never had a chance to fully grieve your own loss. As time moves on, the losses pile up.

Sometimes many years pass before the pain resurfaces and you realize you never dealt with the death of someone you cared about. "Avoiders" are really good at this. You thought you could keep shoving the pain down deep enough to never have to experience it fully. But in reality, that pain is going to surface one way or another. You are not wrong or bad for delaying your grief: you were merely doing what you had to do to function at the time.

The good news is that it is never too late to process the losses of your past. An experienced grief therapist can give you the proper support and concrete tools to help you move forward. Call me today and we will talk about how grief therapy can work for you. Let's get started!