

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

*A normal process of grief would go from acute grief to integrated grief, skipping the complicated grief phase completely.

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 a 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.