



MEMBER UPDATE

ReFresh

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This week...

Grief is Love with No Place to Go

It would be fair to say that 2021 has been a year besieged by grief:

- The discovery of unmarked graves of children at former residential school sites
- Deaths from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Devastating fires
- Overwhelming floods
- Personal life losses

At the beginning of the year, we believed we were on a steady return to health, decreased anxiety, and a regular school environment. Alas, that did not happen, an absence that brought its own heaviness of grief.

Grief is a natural response to loss, the emotional suffering felt when something or someone is taken away. The pain of loss can feel overwhelming, and many difficult, unexpected

emotions may arise, from shock or anger to disbelief, guilt, and profound sadness. The more significant the loss, the more intense grief can be.

Losing a loved one is often the most intense type of grief—but any loss can cause grief, including:

- Divorce or relationship breakup
- Loss of health
- Losing a job
- A miscarriage
- Retirement
- Death of a pet
- A loved one's serious illness
- Loss of a friendship
- Loss of safety after a trauma
- Losing a family home

Grieving is a personal experience; there is no right or wrong way to grieve, and the process takes time. Healing happens gradually and there is no 'normal' timetable for grieving. Some people may feel better in weeks or months, and for others, it can take years. It is important to be patient and allow the process to naturally unfold.

Grief may result in both emotional and physical suffering. You may feel:

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Guilt
- Loneliness
- Sadness
- Fatigue, or lack of energy
- Pain
- Trouble sleeping
- Crying spells
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Lowered immunity
- Weight loss or weight gain

- Aches and pains
- Insomnia

Grieving a Loved One

When a loved one dies, you may face grief over your loss again and again — sometimes even years later. These feelings are not a setback in the grieving process; they are a reflection that your loved one's life was important to you. To support your healing, be aware of what emotions and physical symptoms to expect, and how to cope with reminders of your loss.

Reminders can be Anywhere

Reminders of your loved one are inevitable: the anniversary of the person's death, the upcoming winter holidays, birthdays, or other notable dates. Even memorials for others can trigger the pain of your loss.

Reminders can also be tied to sights, sounds, and smells, and can catch you by surprise. You might suddenly be flooded with emotions when you drive by the park your partner loved, or catch the scent of your mom's favourite perfume.

The course of grief is unpredictable. You might experience — many months or years later — the same intense emotions and reactions that you first experienced when you lost your loved one. Have you heard of the 'Ball in a Box' analogy about the pain of grieving? This thoughtful, quick video explains this concept and provides a perspective on how we carry the pain of grief through our lives. [Click here](#).

Tips to Cope with Reawakened Grief

As you continue healing, take steps to cope with reminders of your loss. For example:

- Be prepared. Know when you are likely to experience grief as a reaction to better understand and be ready for your emotions.
- Plan a distraction. Schedule a gathering or a visit with friends or loved ones during times when you're likely to feel alone or be reminded of your loved one's death.
- Reminisce about your relationship. Focus on the good things about your relationship with your loved one and the time you had together, rather than the loss. Write a letter to your loved one or a note about some of your good memories. You can add to this note anytime.

- Start a new tradition. Donate to a charitable organization in your loved one's name on birthdays or holidays. You could even plant a tree in honor of your loved one.
- Connect with others. Bring friends and loved ones close to you, including people who were special to your loved one. Find someone who'll encourage you to talk about your loss.
- Allow yourself to feel a range of emotions. It is normal to be sad and feel a sense of loss, but also allow yourself to experience joy and happiness. As you celebrate special times, you might find yourself both laughing and crying.

When Grief Becomes Too Intense

If your grief gets worse over time instead of better, or interferes with your ability to function in daily life, consult a grief counsellor or other mental health provider. Unresolved or complicated grief can lead to depression, mental health problems, and other medical conditions. Professional help can assist you in re-establishing a sense of control and direction in your life, returning to the path toward healing.

Want to learn more?

[Click here](#) to learn more about:

- The 5 stages of grief
- The types of grief
- Seeking support
- Taking care of yourself while you grieve

Sources

Help Guide | [Coping with Grief and Loss](#)

CAMH | [CAMH Coping with Loss and Grief](#)

Mayo Clinic | [Grief: Coping with Reminders After a Loss](#)

Psych Central | [Coping with Grief: How the Ball and the Box Analogy May Help](#)