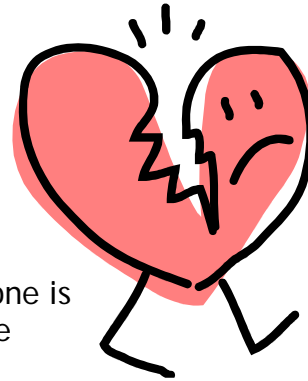


## What is grief?

Grief is the experience of loss. It doesn't only happen after a death; people can have grief after any important loss in their lives. Grief can be experienced after:

- The loss of a job
- The loss of a relationship (for example, divorce)
- The diagnosis of a sudden illness or disability
- The loss of a pet
- Moving away from all of your family/friends



You may experience many different feelings when grieving. Everyone is different, and not everyone feels all of the same emotions. Some people feel:



- Shocked
- Lonely
- Sad
- Scared
- Anxious
- Relieved
- Numb



- Confused
- Empty
- Angry
- Guilty
- At peace
- Like they have a hard time feeling any emotions



## How do I deal with grief?

Dealing with grief is a very personal experience. Often times, people turn to loved ones and other supporters in their time of need. Some people cry a lot when they are grieving, while others don't cry at all. Everyone deals with grief in a different way.

There is no set time on how long grief lasts, so it is important to give yourself enough time to work through your feelings. Allow yourself to feel mad, or sad, or whatever emotions come over you. This is part of the healing process. Just because some people are okay with a loss after one month, doesn't mean that you have to be as well.

Sometimes people are not able to get through this experience on their own. They need to seek help from a professional. Grief counselling supports people through difficulties surrounding their grief. Some situations tend to be more complicated. They are much harder to work through without a professional's help (for example, grief when someone dies suddenly because of a car accident.)

## Coping with a loss

Coping with a loss can be very difficult. Here are some suggestions on how to cope with your loss:



- **Talk to a friend**
- **Write in a journal.** Think about memories that you have with that person. Write a letter to them. Explore how your life has changed with your loss.
- **Take care of yourself.** Try to eat healthy foods. Get enough sleep at night. Try and exercise. Spend time with friends and family.
- **Make a photo collage or a memory box.** If you lost someone close to you, gather pictures or things that remind you of them.
- **Reach out for help.** If you need help, reach out to a loved one or a professional. They're there to help you. Remember, *you're not alone*.
- **Start new traditions.** Holidays can be hard, so try planning new traditions that can support your healing process. Get together with friends you haven't seen in a while. Spend some time telling memories about the person you have lost.

## Helping someone who is grieving

If you have a loved one or friend going through a loss, realize that it might have come as a shock to them. Offer support to them, but if they don't want it, try not to take it personally. They may need to spend time with their family now, but let them know you are there. They will come to you when they are ready.

Check in with your loved one to see if there is anything you can do for them. Invite them to social activities when you feel they may be ready. Even if they decline your invitations often, continue to invite them so they still feel included. Try not to overdo your phone calls and text messages though. If you can get them out of the house for a little while, it may help them think about things other than their loss.

If a loss affects a young person, try to be honest with them about what has happened. Encourage them to share their feelings with you. Be open with them. Answer their questions. Try sharing some of your feelings with them. That way they know that it is okay to feel what they are feeling.

### Avoid:

- Telling your friend to cheer up
- Ignoring your friend or dismissing their grief
- Saying things like "You'll get over it eventually"
- Taking it personally

## Where can I find a Psychologist?

The Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia, 902.422.9183, [www.apns.ca](http://www.apns.ca)

## Where can I find a Social Worker?

Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers, 902.429.7799, [www.nsasw.org](http://www.nsasw.org)

## Where can I find a Psychiatrist?

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Nova Scotia, 902.422.5823, [www.cpsns.ns.ca](http://www.cpsns.ns.ca)



## Websites

Health Canada Grief - [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/empl/\\_news/13-03-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/occup-travail/empl/_news/13-03-eng.php)

Canadian Mental Health Association - [http://www.cmha.ca/mental\\_health/grief-after-suicide/#.U9pyluNdVgg](http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/grief-after-suicide/#.U9pyluNdVgg)

Canadian Mental Health Association - Grief Around the Holidays - <http://www.cmha.bc.ca/get-informed/news/media/12-11-12>

Kids Help Phone - <http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/Emotional-Health/Grief.aspx>

## References:

"Grief ." *Canadian Mental Health Association*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 July 2014. <<http://www.cmha.ca/mental-health/your-mental-health/grief/>>.

Kids Help Phone Counselling Team. "Grief and Loss." *Kids Help Phone*. N.p., January 2011. Web. 31 July 2014. <<http://www.kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/InfoBooth/Emotional-Health/Grief.aspx>>.

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