

“Above all, allow yourself time. Time to reflect, time to grieve and time to heal.” - Unknown

It is common to find yourself asking questions about your grief. Sometimes you may feel unsure if what you are experiencing is considered “normal.” At this point in your grief journey, you may be asking the questions “Does the grief that I am feeling have an end date? When will things in my life be back to normal?” Another question that is often asked is “How long does grief last?”

Often people who are grieving are looking for hope – an affirmation that any pain they are presently experiencing will ease. Unfortunately, there is not a quick or easy answer to the commonly asked questions.

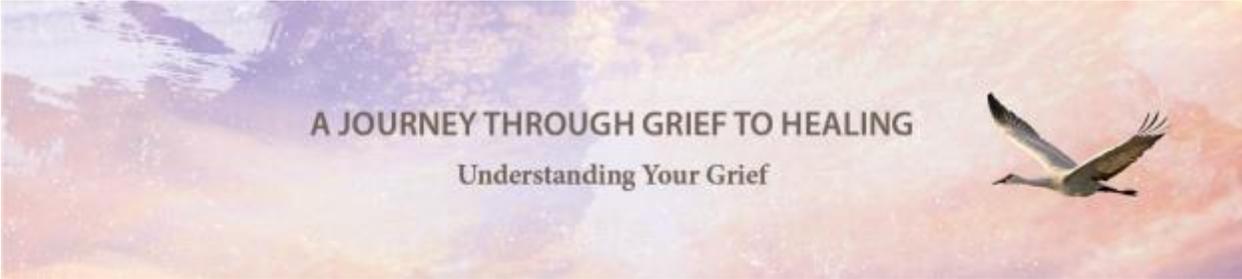
- Grief is highly individualized.
- Grief does not have an end point – a period where we are past it.
- Grief is more like a journey.
- Grief is what enables a grieving person to adapt to living life again.

Such an understanding of grief gives the essential promise that the intense pain of grief is not something to get over, but rather a process that becomes part of a new meaningful life. Friends sometimes get uncomfortable around grief. If they try and make you feel better in the moment, thank them for this and let them know it is normal and natural to feel how you feel. Most importantly, treat yourself with patience and kindness during this time.

It is important to understand your grief journey has become a problem when your self-care, family or work responsibilities become disabling. This is when it is time to seek help and guidance from others, whether it is through friends, a spiritual community or a professional counselor.

Grief workshops, counseling and resources are available to support you during your journey through grief. To request additional information, please email adultbereavement@shands.ufl.edu or call 352.246.8855.


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A JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF TO HEALING

Understanding Your Grief

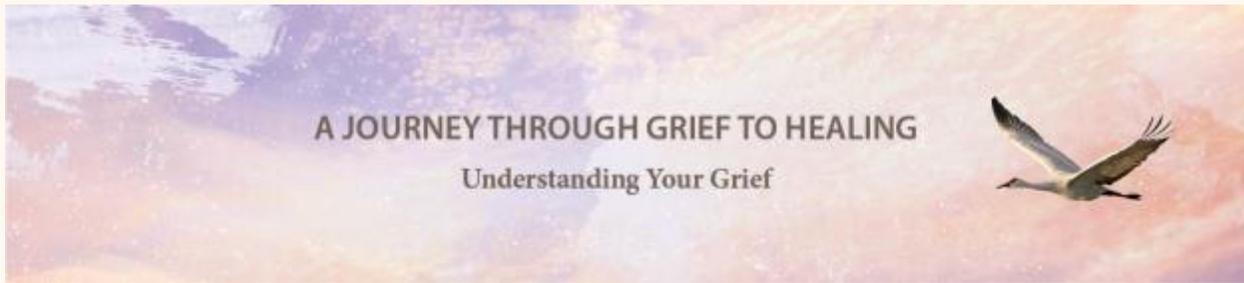
Grief Takes Many Forms

Many people who experience a loss often experience one or more of the following:

- Tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- Decreased appetite or conversely, want to snack often.
- Sense the loved one's presence and talk to him or her.
- Fluctuating feelings – feelings of guilt, sadness or maybe feelings of relief and closure.
- Feel as though the loss is not real and expect to see their loved one again.
- Forget things often or sometimes do not finish the things they have started.
- Have difficulty sleeping and feel exhausted.
- Intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
- Dream of the loved one frequently.
- Assume mannerisms or traits of their loved one.
- Feel guilty or angry over things that happened, or didn't, in the relationship.
- Feel intensely angry at the loved one for dying and leaving them.
- Play and replay the memories of the last days/weeks/hours together.
- Lose all memory of the first hours, or days, after the death.
- Need to tell and retell stories of the relationship and the loss.
- Feel mood changes over the slightest things.
- Cry at unexpected times.
- Resurrect old issues, feelings and unresolved conflicts from the past.
- Forget the importance of self-care.

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When grieving a recent loss, be sure to make time for feeling the emotions that arise, whether they are anger, sadness or pain. There is no need to judge these emotions as good or bad. Know that it is okay to experience these emotions and know they will not last forever.

Grief can become like ocean waves with highs and lows in intensity, often in no typical order, degree or frequency. Eventually, you will develop the ability to live through your grief. You will begin to develop the coping skills needed to live your life while facing your grief. There will come a time in your life when you think of the person you have loved and lost, and through your sadness, you will find yourself able to smile. Joy, laughter and quality days will become more common in your daily life again.

Questions to Ask Yourself

- Am I taking good care of myself?
- Who can I turn to if my grief becomes overwhelming?
- What things can I do today that will bring me joy?

What You Can Do for Yourself

- Open your eyes to the delights around you. It could be a smile on a child's face, smelling a wonderful flower or maybe tasting your own favorite food. Even in the midst of grief, we can be open to the wonders of life.
- Accept the support offered by those around you. Many times those same people are seeking ways to be of assistance to you.
- Seek support through bereavement services offered by your local hospice provider.
- Be patient and remember to not compare yourself to other grievers. Grief is not the same for everyone.

Helpful resources for coping with grief and loss can be found at the websites listed below:

- www.momentsoflife.org/find-hospice
- www.nhpco.org/find-hospice
- UFHealth.org/bereavement

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