

Handling grief in a hurry-up world

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Have you ever lost a loved one, a lifelong dream or a cherished pet? If so, you've experienced grief.

Grief has many characteristics but speed is not one of them. There's no timetable, step-by-step guide or specific end date. This can be hard to accept in a society that puts so much importance on getting things done "yesterday".

What to expect from grief

Experts try to help us understand grief. They've identified many of the common feelings and stages. The bottom line is:

- **Grief hurts.** It hurts emotionally, psychologically and even physically. At times, it may seem hard to bear. Some deny the pain. Some try to escape it by using alcohol, other drugs or medications. As tough as it can be, feeling pain is a normal, necessary part of the grieving and healing process.
- **Everyone's grief is personal.** No two people grieve exactly the same way or for the same length of time. Support groups and talking to others can help you. But know that your grief will follow its own path.
- **Grief takes time.** Death or loss is an event, but grief is a process. At the end of grieving, you will be changed but your life will go on.
- **There are no rules.** Some people feel like crying while others can't shed a tear. Some want to talk while others need to work out their feelings privately. There's no right or wrong. Mourners' needs can't be compared, judged or time-limited.

Ways to help deal with grief

It's important to know some ways to help yourself and others who are mourning. Here are some common questions:

- **What should I say to someone who is grieving?** Many people feel uncomfortable around someone who is grieving because they don't know what to say or do. Avoid dismissive statements like "You'll be fine," "Your loved one wouldn't want you to suffer" or "It's time to move on." When you don't know what to say, say nothing. Put your hand on the mourner's hand. Listen. Bring over a meal. Simple acts like these are supportive and comforting.
- **I've had a loss. When should I expect to feel okay?** You can expect to feel better over time. Typically, the first year is the hardest. You may feel you're on a roller coaster sometimes — having a mix of good days and bad. At some point, you'll realize you're having more and more good days.
- **How can I make my grief go away faster?** Grief is natural and serves a purpose: You're recovering from loss and adjusting to a changed life. It takes time. Rushing it would be unfair to your needs and would dishonor your feelings about the significance of your loss.

Grieving is like the healing of a wound. Give yourself time, patience and lots of self-care.

*Resources: www.turnonyourinnerlight.com, www.seniorliving.about.com, www.sanzplans.com