

Condition:



Bereavement and Grief

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What is bereavement and grief?

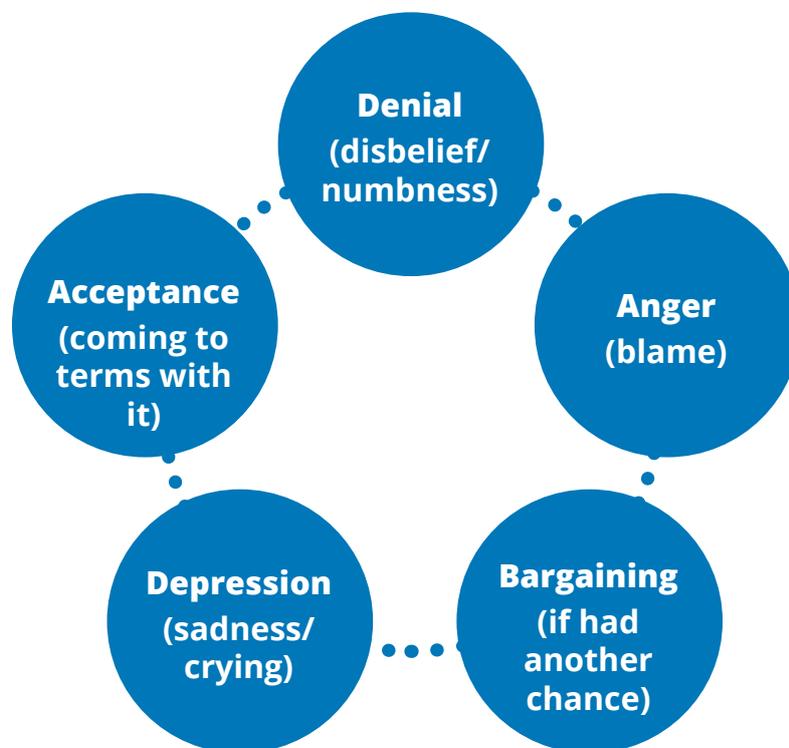
Bereavement is the loss of someone who had played a role in your life and grief is the emotion you feel in such a situation. Grief can also be the loss of something important in your life such as your job, relationship or ability to do things such as through illness or trauma.

It is important to understand that although bereavement / loss are awful and painful it is also a natural reaction. The sense of shock caused by the incident will depend upon many factors:

- The circumstance of the death: a sudden and unanticipated death is more of a shock than one where a protracted illness has provided time to contemplate it.
- The age of the person who has died?
- Your relationship to the deceased, the more central the deceased was to your lifestyle, the more obvious your loss will be.
- The impact of the loss on your life and circumstances

Complicated grief – this refers to persistent form of bereavement / loss that dominated a person's life, interfering with daily functioning for an extended period of time.

Individuals who experience grief go through the stages of grief – there is no particular order and not everyone will experience them all.



Returning to work after a bereavement or loss

Returning to working after losing someone close to you or something important to you, might feel like the last thing you want to do. Though some people prefer to return back to work quickly in order to get into a routine.

The following are some top tips to think about before your return to work:

Are your colleagues aware – your manager is likely to be aware of what you have experienced but before your return to work you might wish to consider if you want to notify your colleagues or not. Making them aware can help avoid any awkward questions that might be upsetting for you.

Plan for the small talk – working in a busy workplace can be full of “small talk” for example “How are you?” or “what have you been up to?” For others this might seem like a normal question but for you it could be impossible for you to answer.

Strategies to stay focused – it is key to develop strategies for yourself that are going to help keep you focused. Even the smallest of tasks might feel impossible. Your attention span might be shorter and you might find yourself easily distracted and forgetful.

Write to do lists – this will help keep in line your time management as well as helping you keep focused on the tasks that you have in hand too.

Find a quiet place for yourself – sometimes you may get overwhelmed and start to cry or panic. When this happens it might be useful to have discussed with your manager previously and go into a quiet place so you can be alone too.

Take advantage of employer resources and benefits - your workplace may offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which can offer free confidential counselling or other support. Find out what's available to you.

How you might be feeling

Each type of loss means the bereaved person has had something taken from them. Grief can be experienced as the following and affect these areas.

Behaviours

Sleeping problems, change in appetite, absent minded, having dreams or nightmares, crying, searching, hyperactivity, teasing objects, avoiding reminders.

Feelings

Numbness, shock, fear/anxiety, sadness, helplessness, anger, guilt, tiredness, jealousy, relief, worthlessness.

Physical Sensations

Tightness in chest and throat, breathlessness, lack of energy, dry mouth, oversensitivity to noise

Cognitions

Disbelief, confusion, sense of presence, hallucinations, preoccupation.

What can help with the way I am feeling?

Grief is a powerful emotion, which can be painful and tiring too. Therefore at times it might feel easier to avoid these emotions, however this might not be a good long term solution. Buried grief can present itself later as physical or emotional illness. Working through the sorrow and allowing yourself to express your feelings will help you to heal.

Grief / loss counselling tends to be used as treatment which can help with normal grief reactions. Grief counselling is provided by professionally trained people and also self-help groups too – where bereaved people can support each other.

Goals of the counselling:

- Describing normal grieving and encouraging the bereaved to accept the loss by talking about it.
- Helping the bereaved to identify and express feelings related to the loss.
- Helping the bereaved to understand his or her methods of coping.
- Describing the differences in grieving among individuals.
- Providing continuous support.
- Providing support at important times.
- Identifying coping with problems the bereaved may have and making recommendations for professional grief therapy.

Self-care after a bereavement

Learn how to care for yourself after a loss.

Listen to your body (if you need to cry, sleep, talk or reminisce then do so)

Pamper yourself.

Lower expectations for yourself (you can't expect yourself to run at full capacity)

Keep a journal.

Let others know what you need from them

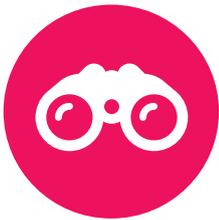
Get physical exercise (if this is something you would do normally try to continue this too)

If you need counseling, do get it (Get all the support that you need)

Obtain a proper diet and sleep

Take the time to do the things you need to do for yourself

Be aware of others reactions too



Take notice

Try to be more mindful of your surroundings which can help you to focus on the now and not your loss.



Connect

As mentioned above don't go it alone – talk and connect with other people even when you feel low.



Be Active

Exercise is evidenced to improve our moods so get out every day even if it is just stepping out for a short walk to the local shop.



Give

Giving even when you feel very low can benefit you and others - give something back into the community or to people around you. For example get involved in a local project.



Keep learning

Learning something new works as both a distraction and a motivator - try to take opportunities that you have around you to learn something new and develop on skills that you already have.

Useful links

Helplines

Bereavement
Advice Centre
0800 634 9494

Child
bereavement
UK
0800 028 8840

Cruse
0808 808 1677

Child death
helpline
0800 282 986

Survivors of
bereavement by
suicide (SOBS)
0300 111 5065