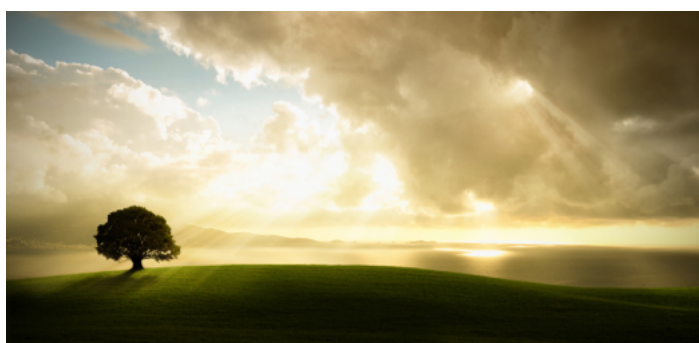




Grief, Bereavement and Loss

A guide to coping with loss after the death of a loved one



Coping with the death of a loved one is a personal experience.

There is no normal or perfect way to respond.

It is our hope that this booklet will:

- help you understand your feelings of grief
- offer ways to cope with your grief
- give you the information and resources you need

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What is grief?

Grief is a personal reaction to a loss. It is the body's way of responding to the loss of someone we have loved and cared for.

Grieving is how we move through the experience of significant and intense losses.

The process of grieving is similar to the process of physical healing.

The work we do through grieving can bring us to a new state of physical, emotional and spiritual balance.

...the natural journey of mourning involves a struggle between the need to evade the pain of the loss and encounter the pain of the loss.

- Alan. D. Wolfelt

What can grief feel like?

When someone you love dies, your emotions, health, social life, and spiritual wellbeing can change. You may feel unusual and upset by these changes. These feelings and changes are a normal reaction to your grief.

You may feel:

- numb
- alone
- anxious or worried
- angry
- guilty
- sad, like crying or sighing
- depressed
- confused
- relieved

You may also experience the following:

- finding it hard to believe your loved one has died
- difficulty focusing and making decisions
- dreaming about your loved one
- seeing images of your loved one
- trouble sleeping
- changes in your appetite
- physical symptoms like aches and pains or an upset stomach

You might lose interest in:

- your day-to-day routine
- sex or intimacy
- your relationships

How long will I grieve?

Grieving is a personal experience that affects people differently. There is no right or wrong way for you to react to the death of your loved one.

Symptoms of grief may occur less often and feel less intense as time passes. As symptoms of grief lessen, you will feel able to return to day-to-day life.

People can have both good days and bad days when they are grieving. Grief can come in waves of strong emotional feelings from reminders of your loved one, or for no reason at all.

Feelings of grief can return or feel worse on special days like birthdays, anniversaries and holidays when your loved one is especially missed. It is normal to feel your grief at different times throughout your life.



*Mourning never really ends.
Only as time goes on it erupts less frequently.*
- Alan. D. Wolfelt

How can I help myself?

Body

- Take care of yourself
- Talk to your family doctor about any physical concerns
- Take part in activities you enjoy such as going for a walk, reading or doing exercise

Social

- Talk with a friend, family member or a member of your faith community
- Share memories, stories and photographs of your loved one
- Join a group or do one-on-one counseling—this can be in person, by phone or over the internet

Emotional and spiritual

- Be patient—grieving takes time
- Know that others people have responded in the same way
- Let yourself experience the pain of grief
- Know that it is alright to express your feelings
- Write a letter to your loved one
- Use the resources of your faith or spirituality

Resources for more information and support

Bereaved Families of Ontario

Email: info@bereavedfamilies.net

Phone: 416-440-0290

- Bereaved Families of Ontario offers individual and group programs across the province for children, adolescents, young adults, parents and grandparents.
- Contact information for each region is listed on the website.

Canadian Virtual Hospice

- The Canadian Virtual hospice provides information and supportive resources on palliative care, end-of-life care, and loss and grief

Children and Youth Grief Network

- The Children and Youth Grief Network provides information, resources and programs across the province of Ontario for grieving children and youth.

Hospice Association of Ontario

- The hospice association of Ontario has over 180 associate and individual members who provide free bereavement support across Ontario.

For people coping with a cancer diagnosis or the death of a loved one from cancer

Gilda's Club Greater Toronto

Email: info@gildasclubtoronto.org

Phone: 416-214-9898

- Gilda's club offers support groups, workshops, lectures, social events, and activities for adults, teenagers and children affected by a cancer diagnosis.

Wellspring Cancer Support Network

Phone: 416-961-1928

- Wellspring is a community-based cancer support program that offers a variety of support services to individuals and family members including bereavement support.

Other resources

- Your faith or spiritual community
- Your family doctor or health team
- Your funeral home

Books for adults

Grief's Courageous Journey: A Workbook by Sandi Caplan & Gordon Lang

Mourning Has Broken – A Collection of Creative Writing about Grief and Healing

Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

Books for children and teens

Healing Your Grieving Heart for Teens: 100 Practical Ideas by Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD

Lifetimes by Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen

- Lifetimes is a book that parents and family members can use to explain life and death. The book helps children understand that dying is as much a part of living as being born.

When Someone Very Special Dies: Children Can Learn to Cope with Grief by Marge Heegaard

When Dinosaurs Die by Laurie Krasney Brown and Marc Brown

The Memory Tree by Britta Teckentrup