



GRIEF

WHAT IS GRIEF?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. The more significant the loss, the more intense your grief will be. You may associate grieving with the death of a loved one—which is often the cause of the most intense type of grief—but any loss can cause grief like divorce or relationship breakup, loss of health, losing a job, loss of financial stability or a miscarriage.

Myths and facts about grief and grieving:

Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it.

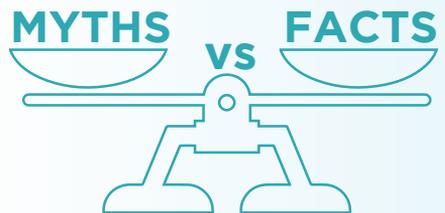
Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.

Myth: It's important to “be strong” in the face of loss.

Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to “protect” your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

Myth: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.

Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.



Myth: Grieving should last about a year.

Fact: There is no specific time frame for grieving. How long it takes differs from person to person.

Myth: Moving on with your life means forgetting about your loss.

Fact: Moving on means you've accepted your loss—but that's not the same as forgetting. You can move on with your life and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you.

In fact, as we move through life, these memories can become more and more integral to defining the people we are.



The Grieving Process

Grieving is a highly individual experience; there's no right or wrong way to grieve. How you grieve depends on many factors, including your personality and coping style, your life experience, your faith, and how significant the loss was to you. Inevitably, the grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually; it can't be forced or hurried—and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Whatever your grief experiences, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

7 Stages of grief



(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

1. Shock	Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
2. Denial	Trying to avoid the inevitable.
3. Anger	Frustrated outpouring of bottle-up emotion.
4. Bargaining	Seeking in vain for a way out.
5. Depression	Final realization of the inevitable.
6. Testing	Seeking realistic solutions.
7. Acceptance	Finally finding the way forward.

Instead of a series of stages, we might also think of the grieving process as a roller coaster, full of ups and downs, highs and lows. Like many roller coasters, the ride tends to be rougher in the beginning, the lows may be deeper and longer. The difficult periods should become less intense and shorter as time goes by, but it takes time to work through a loss. Even years after a loss, especially at special events such as a family wedding or the birth of a child, we may still experience a strong sense of grief.

Source: Hospice Foundation of America

When to seek professional help for grief

Contact a counselor if you: 1. Feel like life isn't worth living 2. Wish you had died with your loved one 3. Blame yourself for the loss or for failing to prevent it 4. Feel numb and disconnected from others for more than a few weeks 5. Are having difficulty trusting others since your loss 6. Are unable to perform your normal daily activities.

For more information, you are welcome to contact Platinum Health's Mental Health Services (014 590 1700 or 080 000 6942). EAP Counsellors (010 133 0525) are also available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week to offer counselling and support.