

Dealing with grief and loss



At some point in our lives, we all experience what it's like to grieve the loss of someone or something we love and care about.

Whether it's losing a family member, spouse, pet, or leaving a family home, grief and loss comes in many forms and affects everyone differently.

We may often have previous experience dealing with these types of losses, but it's still incredibly important for you to get the help and support you need to deal with these difficult situations.

What are some signs of grief?

Grief can be a complex and difficult emotion to navigate, and it's important to recognise and acknowledge the signs of grief to help manage and work through it.

Often referred to as the 'five stages of grief', here are 5 common signs of grief to look out for:

- Denial: difficulty accepting the reality of the loss
- Anger: feeling frustrated or resentful about the loss
- Bargaining: wishing for a way to undo or change what has happened
- Depression: feeling sad, lonely, or hopeless
- Acceptance: beginning to find some peace and resolution with the loss and feeling more able to move forward with life.

It's important to remember that the five stages of grief don't always happen in this order.



Signs of grief

There are several common signs that someone may be experiencing grief, including:

- Confusion or forgetfulness
- Loss of appetite and unintentional weight loss
- Fatigue, irritability, sadness, and anguish
- Difficulty sleeping, concentrating, and finding motivation
- Withdrawing from social activities and relationships.

It's important to note that grief affects everyone differently and not all of these signs may apply to every person. If you or someone you know is struggling with grief, it's important to seek support and care from a healthcare professional or a trained counsellor.



Helpful strategies

Grieving is a challenging experience, and even with the best support and coping mechanisms, it can still be difficult to navigate. However, there are various tools and strategies that can be helpful during the grieving process. Here are some ideas that may be beneficial.

1. Stay connected with others

Healthy relationships support good mental health during grieving, while social isolation and poor relationships can be risk factors for depression and anxiety.

Some people find sharing personal information a natural and easy thing to do. Others might need support from a health professional or community group to feel more comfortable opening up.

The quality of your relationships is just as important as the number of people in your social network. Good mental health is linked to having supportive people in your network and means you can relax and have fun, as well as find support in difficult times.

Things you can do to be more socially active:

- Stay in touch with friends and family by calling them or arranging to meet up.
- Consider reaching out to acquaintances or neighbours if you're feeling lonely.
- Go to local events or markets to meet new people and connect with your community.
- Be friendly and open to chatting with strangers when out and about.

2. Eat a balanced diet

When grieving, a well-balanced diet is essential as you withstand the stress associated with this process. That means eating plenty of vegetables, fruits, and lean proteins, and drinking plenty of water. If your appetite is low, try eating small portions more frequently.

3. Get enough sleep

Lack of sleep is a common issue during the grieving process, but it's crucial to try to maintain a consistent sleep schedule. This means aiming for the same amount of sleep as before your loss and establishing a bedtime and wake-up time.

Developing a relaxing bedtime routine, such as taking a warm bath or drinking a calming tea, can also help signal to your brain and body that it's time to wind down and sleep.

4. Exercise regularly

In addition to the physical benefits, exercise can also help manage stress, anxiety, and depression from grief, which can be just as detrimental to your health as physical ailments and injuries. Maintaining positive mental health is important.

Exercising with a friend or loved one can not only provide added motivation and accountability but can also offer a social connection and a chance to talk about your feelings and experiences.

CONTACT US

Website: liveup.org.au

Email: communities@liveup.org.au

Phone: 1800 951 971

Facebook: facebook.com/LiveUpAus

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