



# Grief / Bereavement

**Grief** is a deep sadness or sorrow that results from a loss. The loss can be a major or minor one. It can result from something positive or negative.

**Bereavement** is grieving most often linked with the death of a loved one.

## Treatment

Understanding the normal stages of grief, the passage of time, and self-care measures treat most cases of grief. When these are not enough, counseling can help.



Get more information from:

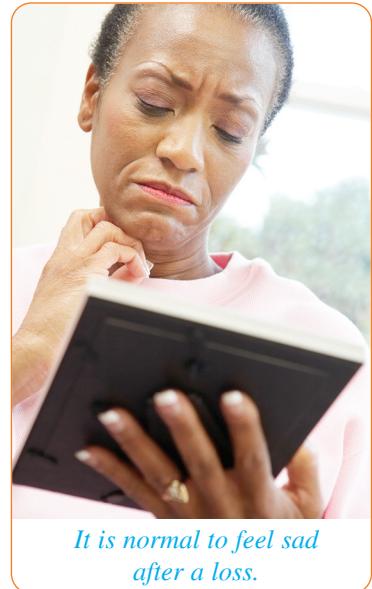
HealthyLearn®  
[www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com)

AARP Grief Support  
[www.aarp.org/family/lifeafterloss](http://www.aarp.org/family/lifeafterloss)

## Signs & Symptoms

### Stages of Grief

1. *Shock.* You feel dazed or numb.
2. *Denial and searching.*
  - You are in a state of disbelief.
  - You ask questions, such as, “Why did this happen?” or “Why didn’t I prevent this?”
  - You look for ways to keep your loved one or loss with you.
  - You think you see or hear the deceased person.
  - You begin to feel that the loss is real.
3. *Suffering and disorganization.*
  - You feel guilty, anxious, depressed, lonely, afraid, etc.
  - You may place blame on everyone and everything.
  - You may get physical symptoms. These include headaches, stomachaches, constant fatigue, and/or shortness of breath.
  - You withdraw from routine and social contacts.
4. *Recovery and acceptance.*
  - You begin to look at the future instead of dwelling on the past.
  - You adjust to the reality of the loss.
  - You develop new relationships.
  - You develop a positive attitude.



*It is normal to feel sad after a loss.*

Grieving the loss of a loved one can last weeks, months, or years.



## Grief / Bereavement, Continued

### Causes

- A new or lost job, a promotion, demotion, or retirement.
- Relationship changes, such as getting divorced or having a child leave home.
- An illness, injury, and/or disability.
- The death of a family member or friend. Loss of property. Moving to a new place.

Factors that shape a person's response to a loss, such as death include:

- Age, gender, and health.
- How sudden the loss was.
- Cultural background. Religious beliefs.
- Finances.
- Social network.
- History of other losses or traumatic events.

Each of these factors can add to or reduce the pain of grieving.

### Questions to Ask

Have you just attempted suicide? Have you written a suicide note? Are you making plans for suicide or having repeated thoughts of suicide or death?

NO

Do you overuse medication and/or alcohol to feel better or to cope or "numb" the pain?

NO

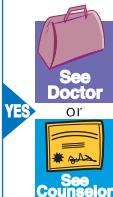
YES  
Get Medical Care Fast

YES  
See Doctor or

See Counselor

Do you have any of these problems?

- Extreme stress with your marriage and/or children.
- You can't cope day to day.
- You have ongoing problems with insomnia. You cry too much. You are depressed, feel guilty, or eat too much or too little.
- You refuse to sort through the deceased's belongings after time passes.



YES



NO

### Self-Care / Prevention

- Eat regular meals.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Allow friends and family to help you. Don't hold your feelings inside. State how you really feel. Visit them, especially during the holidays, if you would otherwise be alone. Travel during the holidays if this helps.
- Share and maintain memories of a lost loved one. Being reminded of the past can help with the process of coming to grips with a loss.
- Try not to make major life changes, such as moving during the first year of grieving.
- Join a support group for the bereaved. People and places to contact include your EAP representative, your student counseling center, churches or synagogues, funeral homes, and hospice centers.
- Adopt a pet.
- Read self-help books about grief and death.

Flowchart continued in next column