

Grief Tip Sheet

8 life events that can cause grief — and how to cope with them.

1 Death of a loved one

The death of a loved one is usually the event that comes to mind when people think about grief. Whether a family member or dear friend, losing a loved one is devastating. Acknowledge your feelings without trying to suppress them. Take the time you need to grieve at your own pace, and give yourself permission to grieve in your own way. Seek the support of friends and family, or turn to a therapist if you feel you could use some professional help processing your loss.

2 Divorce or relationship breakup

Your whole world gets tossed upside down during a divorce or breakup — even if the relationship was an unhealthy one. Recovering can be difficult and may take time. It's important to remind yourself that you will feel better and eventually move on with renewed hope. Tell yourself it's OK to feel different things at different times. Most importantly, give yourself a break. Take time to heal, regroup, and re-energize.

3 Loss of health

When faced with a serious medical condition, you're grieving the loss of your good health while also worrying about your future. Social support can have a huge impact on your mental health during this difficult time. Friends and family can also provide vital assistance to make your situation easier, such as driving you to medical appointments or helping with household chores. Staying connected to people and activities can make a world of difference in your overall outlook as you undergo treatments.

4 Death of a pet

A pet is much more than “just a dog” or “just a cat.” They're a beloved part of your family. So, when a cherished pet dies, it's only natural to grieve the loss. Allow yourself to feel genuine grief for your animal companion without embarrassment or judgment. Talk with others who have lost pets and share your happy memories and positive experiences. Remembering the fun and love you shared with your pet can help you to move on eventually.

5 Fertility challenges

Often overlooked by society, fertility challenges are a real source of grief, as women and men hoping to conceive a child go through the emotional process of discovering they cannot. Sometimes miscarriages or stillbirths are involved, further compounding the grief. It's normal to feel a huge sense of loss, along with stress, sadness, frustration, and even anger. Acknowledge your emotions without judgment, and most importantly don't blame yourself (or your partner) for the situation. Turn to experts for guidance as you consider your options going forward, while also reaching out to friends, family, and professionals for emotional support. Connecting with others going through similar issues can help. And, as you grieve, it's OK to skip baby showers or other events you find too painful.

6 Financial loss

Financial stress tops many people's lists of concerns. No matter how hopeless your situation may seem, there is a way out. A few simple strategies can help you break a downward spiral, ease money problems, and find financial stability again. Start by talking with a trusted friend or loved one about your money problems. This can help put things in perspective. You might also consider debt counseling or other professional advice. Keep track of your income, debt, and spending for at least a month — if not longer. Partner with an expert or use online budgeting tools to make a recovery plan, then stick to it.

7 Losing a job

Losing a job, no matter what the reason, is one of life's most stressful experiences. Our jobs help define us and how we view our place in the world. Suddenly finding yourself out of work can leave you feeling hurt, angry, or depressed. Allow yourself to grieve the loss — loss of control over your life, loss of a professional identity, loss of a work-based social network, loss of a sense of security, and more. Reach out to friends who are good listeners. Don't try to shoulder the loss alone. Involve your family and make time for family fun.

8 Retirement

At first, the idea of retirement may seem like a great relief — the reward you've been working toward for decades. But after a few months, many retirees find that the novelty of being on "permanent vacation" starts to wear off. You may miss the sense of identity, meaning, and purpose that came with your job as you grieve the loss of your former life. Embrace the change and adjust your approach. Think of retirement as a journey, not a destination. Find new purpose and meaning — pursue activities that add joy and enrich your life. Don't overlook your health. Keeping your body and mind active and healthy at this time is very important.

SAMPLE VERSION