

What is Grief?

Grief is a natural and normal reaction to any kind of loss. Some examples of loss include, but are not limited to:

- Death of someone you love
- Death of a pet
- Ending a relationship
- Loss of a job, scholarship, game, championship or other important endeavor

Grief can create a variety of emotions that can range from deep sadness to anger. Some of these feelings may be new to you. Accepting and acknowledging that these are normal reactions in grieving is one of the first steps in healing from a loss.

There are many healthy ways to cope with grief. You can find ways that work for you. Know that there's plenty of resources at UNH if you need assistance.

Unresolved & Complicated Grief

Sometimes people are unable to accept loss or to experience some of the emotions connected with loss. This is often called unresolved or complicated grief.

Symptoms include:

- Over an extended amount of time the person seems unable to move through the normal stages of grief.
- The person experiences prolonged physical difficulties such as loss of appetite, insomnia, fatigue, agitation, listlessness, loss of interest, or difficulty concentrating.
- The person expresses unreasonable or chronic guilt or thoughts of suicide.

People with "normal" grief may also experience these reactions. But the reactions don't tend to interfere with life as much or as long.

Unresolved/complicated grief is similar to depression and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Resources at UNH

Psychological & Counseling Services
(603) 862-2090
www.unh.edu/pacs

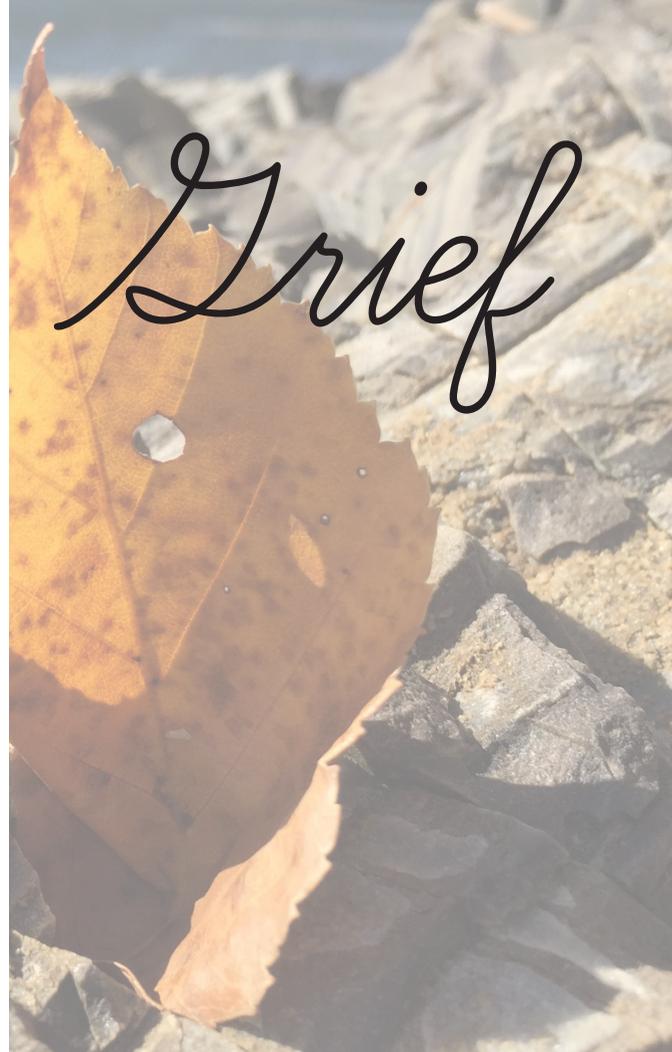
Counseling and support groups

Health & Wellness
(603) 862-9355 (WELL)
<http://www.unh.edu/health>

Wellness coaching, coping with stress skill building workshops and groups, and consultations with clinical providers. Massage therapy, yoga workshops and meditation groups and retreats are also available.

United Chaplains Association
(603) 862-1165
unh.edu/student-life/unh-chaplains-association

Spiritual guidance, individual counseling, assistance finding additional spirituality support in the community



UNDERSTANDING THE HEALING PROCESS

With self-compassion, we give ourselves the same kindness and care we'd give to a good friend who was grieving.



UNH Health & Wellness

WWW.UNH.EDU/HEALTH/SLEEP

(603) 862-WELL (9355)



Health & Wellness

Cycle of Loss

Everyone goes through a cycle of grief when dealing with loss. Although the cycle of grief is universal, individual grief is not. We each grieve in our own way and enter each stage at our own pace. Some of us even visit one stage more than once. To begin to heal from a loss, it is important to understand the stages of feelings you will experience. All these feelings are a natural part of experiencing loss.

Denial, Shock and Disbelief

This is a typical first reaction after a loss. It's nature's way of protecting you from the impact of the loss for awhile. You may:

- Have trouble believing the loss is real
- Feel numb
- Have a sense of being in a dream
- Keep expecting the loss to come back, even though your rational mind knows it won't

Anger or Resentment

This is a very common stage, even if there is no one to blame for the loss.

You may:

- Feel like a great injustice has been done
- Be angry at others
- Be angry at your god
- Resent the person you have lost for leaving you alone

Guilt

It's normal to regret things you did or didn't say, do or feel. Some people may regret or feel guilty for:

- Not being there to say goodbye
- Being relieved that the person is gone
- Having arguments with the loved one when they were still in your life

Depression

Loss can cause one to feel anxious, helpless, and extremely sad. You may feel:

- Unable to handle new responsibilities
- Fears about your own death
- Afraid to face life without the person you lost
- Lonely
- Like there is a hole in the center of your life
- A deep yearning for something more
- Like you are reliving all the other sadnesses you've had in your life

Acceptance, Hope & Personal Growth

In time, the future begins to look hopeful, even though you may still feel pain for your loss. Working through grief may give you new strengths and insight. You may:

- Feel that you have more empathy for others
- Have new confidence in yourself
- Want to explore new interests and relationships
- Have a greater understanding of what is important to you
- Give yourself permission to focus on yourself and what makes you happy

Healing Process

Allow Yourself to Grieve

There's no right or wrong way to feel or think about loss. Allow your feelings and thoughts to be what they are and don't be pressured by others' ideas of how you "should" or "have to" be. Crying, talking, writing, creating art or doing physical activities are all great ways to express your feelings and thoughts. Be patient and kind with yourself.

Reach Out To People You Trust

This is the time to lean on friends, family, counselors and other supportive people. Often, people want to help but don't know how. Try simply telling them what you need.

Spiritual Wellness

Spiritual wellness is connecting with something greater than yourself to find meaning in life events. Some ways you can practice spiritual wellness are praying, meditating, spending time in nature or practicing yoga. Spirituality aids in coping with stress and envisioning a future after loss.

Use Mindfulness and Meditation to Cope with Stress

Mindfulness is paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, with kindness. You can practice mindfulness by focusing on your breath as it moves in and out of your body. When your mind gets distracted, simply return to the breath. This activity creates a mindful pause that allows you to gain a new perspective and stay in the moment to practice self-care.

Writing and Create Art to Heal

Writing about your feelings and thoughts is a safe and private way to express how you are feeling. Even if you have never journaled before, give it a try. If you don't have the words, create art. Use shapes and images that speak to you in the moment. You may experience difficult feelings when you write or create art instead, this is natural and often leads to insight and eventually a sense of relief.

Take Care of Your Physical Wellness

Grief can put a lot of stress on your body. Take extra care during this time to keep yourself healthy.

- Eat a variety of fruits, vegetables and grains. Limit saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugars and drink plenty of water. And treat yourself to your favorite foods.
- Get your body moving at least 30 minutes every day.
- Get at least 7+ hours sleep/night. If you are tired during the day, take a 20 minute nap.
- Avoid the use of alcohol and other drugs, which can increase feelings of anxiety and sadness.

You have the capacity to heal. Be patient with yourself.