

Untethered

Coping with the loss of a relationship



Losing people from your daily life can be painful and shocking.

The loss of a spouse is at the top of the list of the most stressful events you can experience, says the Holmes-Rahe Stress Inventory. It's closely followed by divorce and separation from a partner.¹ Grief is a natural response to these types of losses.^{1,2} The combined elements of grief, change in lifestyle, routines and even identity can send you reeling.

You can experience grief and loss in a variety of ways, not just those we think of as common. They can look like:

- Losing any loved one
- Having your child move out or leave for college
- Losing your beloved pet
- Changing jobs or careers
- Losing your doctor, dentist or other professional who knows your life intimately
- Breaking up with a close friend
- Moving from your home

What loss looks like

Physical and emotional losses can feel similar and are deeply personal. You could experience changes to your family, finances, identity, location or sense of self. Living with loss is emotionally challenging and can be unsettling. It can make you feel untethered or disconnected. It may affect your sense of self and leave you feeling anxious and stressed.² Your regular activities may be disrupted and could leave you feeling afraid, sad or confused.³ But there are healthy ways you can manage and cope with loss.

Working through grief and loss

People approach grief and pain differently. Some cope in unhealthy ways, but here are some tips to help you restore a sense of balance in a healthy way.

Name and claim your loss.

Write about it, whether it's tangible or not. It helps to define your loss and validate it.² Honor loved ones with a celebration of life, memory book or tribute page.⁴

Stay connected.

Be physically present with others who share your loss. Social connections provide support and comfort. If you can't be there in person, keep in touch virtually.^{2,4}

Stick to a routine.

Eat healthy, balanced meals, stay hydrated and active, and keep to a regular sleep schedule. It can help you maintain a feeling of control, a sense of order and purpose.⁴

Talk to a counselor.

A therapist familiar with grief and loss can help guide you through your feelings. They can also teach you ways to manage them.

The five stages of grief

One familiar model created by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross helps us understand that grieving is a process.^{5,6} No two people experience these stages in the same order, for the same amount of time or in the same way. Not everyone experiences all of them. Some of us move from one to another and back again.

Denial Bad news is shocking. Sometimes you cannot process it. Denial can be a natural response to a crisis. You move past it when your mind is ready for more information.

Anger After the shock wears off, you may feel angry. It's a natural emotional reaction that helps protect you from the pain of loss.

Bargaining Wishing "what if" or "if only" for a different outcome gives you a sense of control in a time when you feel powerless. However, this thinking can't change your loss.

Depression This is the stage when loss finally hits you. You may feel intense sadness and helplessness.

Acceptance Your mind reaches a point of no longer struggling against your grief. This doesn't mean everything feels better. But it does mean you can move forward.



Learn how we can help support you on your wellness journey. To sign up or learn more, go to TeladocHealth.com/Smile/HEALTHYCOUNTRY.

¹https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/3190/2023/02/WSUMED_Holmes_Rahe-Life-Stress-Inventary.pdf

²<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/06/covid-grieving-life>

³<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7607397/>

⁴<https://www.cdc.gov/howrightnow/emotion/grief/>

⁵<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/mindful-anger/202207/5-stages-grief-and-what-we-can-learn-about-ourselves>

⁶<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/5-stages-of-grief-coping-with-the-loss-of-a-loved-one>

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