Throughout life, we have meaningful relationships with other people. These people can be in our lives for different lengths of time, sometimes for very long and sometimes only for a short time. Regardless of the length of time we have them in our lives, losing them when they die can create significant sorrow and feelings of loss. Grief or grieving is the emotional response we experience when we lose someone close to us. Grieving can affect not just how we feel but also how we act and how we think. Beliefs we have about that person and about what happens to them after they pass play a big role in the grieving process.

There are actually many different kinds of loss that can lead to feelings of grief. For some people the passing of an animal, a dear pet, can be just as difficult as the passing of a person. Children can feel a similar sense of loss when someone close to them moves away or has to be gone for a long period of time. Grief is powerfully affected by the sense that we won't see that person or animal or be with them for a long period of time, if at all.

**What is the process of grieving?**

Many authors and researchers have made attempts to define the process of grieving. They have tended to focus on certain steps including denial, anger, bargaining, resolution and acceptance. What seems to be true about all of these grieving processes is just how different they are for every person. Some people pass through the stages of grief as described in these models. Other people may skip steps or go through the stages in a different order. Finally, some people seem to come up with their own steps that have not been identified before. The important fact is that everyone grieves differently, and everyone has different reasons for grieving a particular loss.

You may be grieving the actual loss of someone close to you during, and perhaps as a result of, the pandemic. You may also be grieving other losses that have occurred such as the loss of important opportunities or events as a result of the pandemic.

**What can I do to help with my feelings of grief and loss?**

At some point in a grieving process, it becomes important to talk with someone else. That point can be different for every person, and it is important to never try to force someone to talk if they are not ready, or if they feel like they don’t need to. When the time is right, listening is more important than talking. The listener should pay attention not only to the feelings that the person is expressing but also to what they are thinking and what was important to them about the person, pet, or experience they have lost. Simply repeating to the person what they said to show you are listening can be helpful. More helpful, however, is to really try to understand why they are feeling the way they are. This requires a certain kind of listening that tends to be done more with the heart than just with the ears.
If you have lost someone close to you, or if you are grieving any kind of loss, simply acknowledging you’re grieving is a good first step. Some people find it very helpful to consult with spiritual advisors they trust or resources about an afterlife to gain a sense of perspective that works for them and helps provide them with understanding about the loss.

When grieving starts to take on the features of prolonged depression, someone may need to seek professional help. Other people close to a person, or the person themselves, may start to notice the grieving process is taking longer than they think it should, or that it is having a more significant negative impact than they think it should. When this happens, it would likely be beneficial to talk with a helping professional who can assess the particular experience with loss and grieving and help accompany the person to a better place of healing and improvement.

The Center for Mental Health is a resource for community members to get help when they need it whether in times of normal stress or pandemic. The goal of The Center for Mental Health is to provide help, hope, and healing and to cultivate communities of wellness where every life is lived to its fullest. Please contact The Center for Mental Health at 970.252.3200 if you would like to work with a professional counselor for help dealing with loss and grieving.

The Center Support Line

A free, 24-hour talk line open to our community during difficult times. If you are feeling stressed, anxious, or just need someone to talk to, call—we can help.

The Center Support Line: 970.252.6220

www.centermh.org • Call 970.252.3200 to learn more or to make an appointment.