

## Grief

Grief is a natural response when you lose something/ someone you love.

It is the process which a person comes to terms with their loss (spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally)

It is important to allow yourself to grieve

Grieving is **NOT** forgetting

Healthy grieving results in the ability to remember the importance of the loss in a new way that brings about peace instead of pain

Everyone at some stage has to grieve

It can affect your feelings, thoughts, behaviours and body

## Tasks of grieving

To accept the reality and finality of the loss (accepting the loss)

To acknowledge and express the full range of feelings we experience (experiencing the pain and grief)

To adjust to life where the loss is no longer a part of it (adjusting to a new life)

Taking the reactions of withdrawal or emotional energy from the past experience and reinvesting in the present (moving on with life)

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**NELSON MANDELA**  
UNIVERSITY

## Enquiries

**Student Counselling, Career and Development  
Centre  
Nelson Mandela University**

<http://counselling.mandela.ac.za>

[counselling@mandela.ac.za](mailto:counselling@mandela.ac.za)



[mandela.ac.za](http://mandela.ac.za)

# Dealing with the loss of a loved one

## Grief triggers

- When a relationship ends
- Moving to a new place
- Death of a pet
- When someone we love has a potentially life threatening illness
- When a goal/an opportunity you have been working towards is suddenly not able to be reached

## Normal feelings experienced when grieving

1. **Sadness** (feel alone/crying all the time. No sleeping, eating/losing weight) *It is okay to feel hurt when we lose something.*
2. **Anger** (when you can't control the loss) *You can control how you grieve.*
3. **Guilt** (you blame yourself for not being able to prevent the loss) *Accept that we are all just human and we can't control everything.*
4. **Anxiety** (you worry about how you will survive the loss) *Accept the power that you have.*
5. **Loneliness** (you feel anxious and alone) *Find support.*
6. **Fatigue** –(feeling very tired) *This is normal when experiencing stress, this is not an indication of weakness.*
7. **Shock** (disbelief, numb) *This is part of grieving.*
8. **Relief** (mixed blessing of sadness and relief maybe when a family member passing after a long battle with illness) *Don't feel guilty if you experience this.*

## Reactions to grief

- **Physical** (hollow stomach, tight chest/throat, sensitivity to noise, shortness of breath, weakness of muscles, dry mouth, lack of energy and numbness)
- **Cognitive** (disbelief, lack of concentration, thinking about too many things at once an imagining/pretending it is as if the deceased is still around)
- **Behavioural** (Sleeping too much/too little, eating too much/too little, social withdrawal, dreaming about your loved one, less energy to do activities, restlessness and crying)

## Stages of grief

### Denial

(Shock, disbelief, numbness, avoiding/blocking feelings)

### Growing awareness of feelings

(Longing, anger, guilt, depression, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, unexpected feelings)

### Bargaining

(Searching for answers, finding meaning)

### Acceptance

(Feeling of victory, peace)

### Adjusting to life without the deceased

(The most difficult task, can experience some guilt for this which is normal, transforming the pain into love)

## Positive ways to cope

1. Take an opportunity to say goodbye to the person
2. Talk regularly to a friend/your support system
3. Carry/wear an object belonging to the person you lost
4. Participate in cultural/spiritual rituals (light a candle or plant a tree in remembrance)
5. Recall your dreams when you dream of the deceased.
6. Write down your thoughts and feelings
7. Create a memory box/collage of pictures
8. Do something your loved one enjoyed doing
9. Express your emotions
10. Talk to the person who passed away, remember the good memories and funny moments you had with them

## Things to consider

Losing someone you love can make you more vulnerable to depression, anxiety, poor academic performance and behavioural problems.

Each person reacts and deals with death in different ways.

### If bereavement is traumatic, it can lead to:

Normal coping capacity will be overwhelmed

Basic trust in relationships will be challenged

Belief systems challenged

Persons idea/view of self is challenged

Social isolation

Substance abuse/ways of numbing the pain

★ *If you are experiencing this, it is advised to seek professional help!*

### Available Resources (Nelson Mandela University)

South Campus: **041 504 2511**

North Campus: **041 504 3222**

Missionvale Campus: **041 504 1106**

Second Avenue Campus: **041 504 3854**

George Campus: **044 801 5047**

In case of an emergency, please use the following numbers for assistance:

Protection Services: **041 504 2009 or 041 504 3483**

Suicide Emergency Line: **0800 567 567 or SMS 31393 for a call back**

Life Line: **0861 322 322** (Counselling available 24/7)

SA Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline: **0800 12 13 14**

**Note:** Student Counselling services are confidential, free of charge to registered Mandela students and offered by qualified counsellors and psychologists.