

GRIEF AND LOSS

Grief is a natural response to loss and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. Often the pain of loss can be as difficult as the chronic pain, and this can be overwhelming at times. Difficult or unexpected emotions such as shock, anger, and sadness can disrupt your ability to cope with daily activities and interfere with how you manage your pain.

Living with pain can make you feel like you've lost your sense of identity and it can impact your living situation, ability to work or some relationships. Everyone reacts to grief and loss differently. The experience can involve difficult emotions and impact how you feel and interact with yourself and those around you.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PROCESSING GRIEF AND LOSS

- Acknowledge your pain.
- Understand the consequences of unacknowledged grief.
- Understand the stages of grief. They are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. It may help you to remember that any of these reactions are natural and all lead to healing with time.
- Recognize the symptoms of grief.
- Take care of yourself as you grieve.
- Understand the difference between grief and depression: Grief on its own can bring a variety of emotions with both good and bad days. Even when you're in the middle of the grieving process, you can still experience pleasure or happiness in your life. With depression, there are far fewer good days and there may be a lack of emotion, or feelings of despair that are far more constant.

THINGS YOU CAN GAIN BY GOING THROUGH THE GRIEVING PROCESS

- A new perspective (through lived experience)
- New friendships as you meet and connect with others who know what it's like to live with pain
- A new sense of purpose as past goals and dreams evolve into new ones
- Strength and insight from having faced difficult times and survived them

THINGS TO DO

- Be patient with everyone, including yourself
- Reimagine your future
- Spend time on your hobbies and interests
- Plan ahead for “triggers” from the past
- Be yourself (even if it’s under new circumstances)
- Modify the activities you love
- Take charge

THINGS TO AVOID

- Avoid thinking there is a way you “should” be grieving
- Avoid comparisons with others’ grief
- Avoid pretending to be ok (it’s ok to be upset!)
- Avoid isolation

RESOURCES

- <https://www.healthline.com/health/grief-cycle-chronic-illness#2>
- <https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/070714p18.shtml>
- <http://www.cfselfhelp.org/library/grieving-your-losses>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/helping-someone-who-is-grieving.htm>
- <https://themighty.com/2019/02/grief-chronic-illness-how-to-cope-tips/#one>
- <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>