

# Understanding grief & loss



Grief is a natural response to losing someone or something significant to you.

Whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or another major life change, grief helps us process loss and slowly adjust to a new reality.

Grief can come from any experience that shifts your sense of security, identity, or connection to the world. No loss is too small to matter if it feels meaningful to you.

**There's no 'right' way to grieve and no set timeline.**

**What matters is finding ways to move through your loss at your own pace and in a way that works for you.**

## Signs & effects

Grief shows up differently for everyone. Some days might feel manageable, while others can feel unexpectedly heavy. Some common experiences include:



### Big changes in emotions

Feeling a mix of sadness, anger, numbness, guilt, or even moments of relief. Whatever comes up is okay.



### Feeling different in relationships

Feeling disconnected, easily irritated, or unsure how to open up to others about what you're going through



### Physical exhaustion

Feeling constantly tired, getting headaches, struggling to sleep, or noticing changes in your appetite.



### Changes in how you act

Wanting to pull away from people, feeling restless, or finding it hard to keep up with everyday tasks.



### A busy or foggy mind

Finding it hard to concentrate, feeling forgetful, or replaying memories of your loss over and over.



### Unexpected waves

Some days might feel lighter, and others might bring big emotions out of nowhere.

# Causes

## Losing a loved one

The death of a family member, friend, partner, or someone who meant a lot to you.

## Relationship change

A breakup, divorce, or growing apart from someone important.

## Health challenges

Coping with illness, injury, or changes to your physical abilities.

## Life transitions

Losing a job, retiring, or moving away from a place that felt like home.

## Natural disasters

Losing your home, community, or sense of safety after events like bushfires, floods, or storms.

## Other losses

Saying goodbye to a pet or experiencing another change that feels deeply personal and significant to you.

## Pregnancy and infant loss

Experiencing miscarriage, stillbirth, or the loss of a newborn.

Grief is deeply personal, and there's no right or wrong way to go through it. The TEAR grieving process is one approach that some people find helpful as they navigate the waves of loss.

# Processing grief with the TEAR model



Here's how the TEAR model can support you:

**T** **To accept the reality of the loss**  
Take time to gently acknowledge that the loss has happened. This might come in moments, not all at once, and that's okay.

**E** **Experience the pain of the loss**  
Whether it's guilt or anger, let yourself feel whatever comes up. There's no 'wrong' emotion and giving yourself space to feel is part of healing.

**A** **Adjust to the new environment**  
Over time, life might look and feel different. This step is about slowly finding ways to adapt, whether it's managing daily routines or navigating changes in relationships.

**R** **Reinvest in the new reality**  
When you're ready, this might look like finding meaning, reconnecting with others, or exploring things that bring joy or purpose again.

You don't have to move through these stages in any set way or timeframe. What matters is finding what helps you feel supported as you move forward, bit by bit.

Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

👉 [lifeline.org.au/toolkit](https://lifeline.org.au/toolkit)

# Practical management strategies



## Acknowledge your feelings

Let yourself experience different emotions (sadness, anger, numbness, or even relief) without judgement.



## Stick to simple routines

Familiar habits, like having regular meals or going for a short daily walk, provides stability in uncertain times.



## Journal your thoughts and feelings

Journaling can help you comprehend confusing or intense emotions. Try start with, 'Right now, I'm feeling...' or 'One thing I wish I could say is...'



## Find comfort in small things

Holding a grounding object, like a smooth stone or a warm mug, can help bring your focus to the present and ease emotional overwhelm.



## Stay connected

Grief can feel isolating. Reaching out to loved ones, a support group, or a counsellor can help.



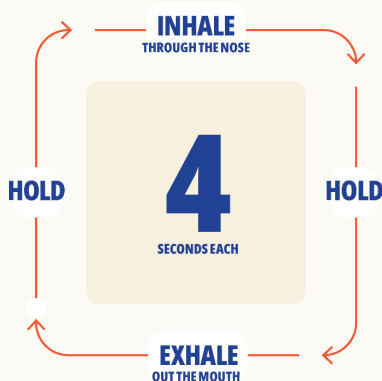
## Write a letter

Writing to the person or thing you've lost can help you process emotions, even if you never s

## Want to try something now?

If your grief feels overwhelming, small actions can help you feel more grounded. Try **box breathing**, using the **five senses activity**, or **journaling** your thoughts and feelings to shift your focus and reconnect with yourself.

### BOX BREATHING



### 5 SENSES TECHNIQUE

Look for...



5 things you can **see**



4 things you can **feel**



3 things you can **hear**



2 things you can **smell**



1 things you can **taste**

### JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS & FEELINGS



What's one emotion I'm feeling?

Where do I notice it in my body?

What might it be trying to tell me?



Everyone is different, so what works for someone else might not work for you, and that's okay.

The key is to keep experimenting until you find what helps you most.

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# When to seek help

You may want to speak with a health professional if:

- ✓ Grief feels overwhelming or isn't easing over time.
- ✓ Daily life feels unmanageable, and you're struggling with work, study, or relationships.
- ✓ You feel isolated or disconnected from the world around you
- ✓ You have thoughts of self-harm or feel hopeless about the future.
- ✓ You're using alcohol, drugs, or other coping strategies that might be making things harder.
- ✓ You're experiencing ongoing physical symptoms like fatigue, headaches, or trouble sleeping.

## Reaching out can feel difficult, but it's a sign of strength.

Support is always available to help you feel more in control and hopeful for the future.

# Support is available

Understanding and managing grief isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to find more practical strategies and discover national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit [lifeline.org.au/grief-and-loss/services](https://lifeline.org.au/grief-and-loss/services) or scan the QR code to get started.



**If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.**

You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at [lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat](https://lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat)

**If your life is in danger, please call 000.**

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