

Everyone Experiences Grief.

Whether someone dies in a natural disaster, a car accident, or from a long-term illness, sooner or later each of us will experience the death of someone we care about and feel the deep pain that goes with it. Grief is a universal experience.

It is a normal process, not a psychiatric disorder. Everyone moves through grief at their own pace and in their own way. It's a lifelong process.

Children are often the "forgotten grievers." In fact, one in five children will experience the death of someone close to them by the age of 18. Since kids can have a naturally delayed grief response, it can be confusing when they seem okay at first and then show signs of acting out, withdrawal, or other problems up to several years later.

Seek help from a qualified therapist if you feel stuck in your grief, you don't want to burden your close friends with your grief, or you want to provide active support to someone who is grieving.

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are "medically necessary." This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



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GRIEF IS NORMAL:

How to Ease the Healing Process



Brought to you by the
California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists



OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 29,000 mental health professionals. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com™ so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage in therapy to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder™ is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.



WHAT TO EXPECT

When the initial shock wears off, it's normal to feel increased pain, guilt, sadness, or anger. In fact, grief can mimic depression with changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and hopeless feelings. You may even worry that others will die or fear for your own safety.

As you move through grief, your "grief bursts" will become shorter and farther apart over time.

NORMAL GRIEF REACTIONS IN CHILDREN

Children under age 5 lack the words to express grief. They don't understand the finality of death and may experience separation anxiety and nightmares. Infants may cry more often or become detached.

Children under age 12 may have a better understanding of death and have strong feelings about it, but may still need encouragement to express their feelings and grief.

Adolescents have an adult understanding of death. A death can impact all of their relationships as well as school and home life. In order to fit in with peers, they may hide their grief. They also may experiment with dangerous behaviors like drugs, alcohol or reckless driving.

WAYS TO HELP KIDS GRIEVE

- Talk about death honestly and use the medical terms for the cause of death when you know them.
- Let kids choose whether or not to visit the hospital, go to the cemetery, or be involved in mourning rituals.
- Validate their feelings and help them continue the relationship with the person who has died

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- **Get support.** Allow people who care about you to help and comfort you. Ask them to share a wonderful memory, hold your hand, or do a simple chore you just aren't up to.
- **Respect your own process.** Everyone moves through grief on his or her own time line. If keeping a loved one's belongings brings you comfort, keep them. Set aside time to grieve. An appointment with grief can help you focus better at work or school.
- **Plan ahead for special days and events.** If you aren't sure if you want to attend that Thanksgiving dinner or New Year's day party, explain that you won't know what you feel like until the day arrives. Ask a friend to be understanding if you cancel at the last minute.
- **Honor the person you miss.** Scatter petals at the beach, kiss a photo good night, or light a candle on an altar. Choose something that is meaningful to you.
- **Find the right therapist.** When you need help moving through grief, seek out a therapist who is warm, supportive, and experienced with grief. Use short telephone interviews to shop for a good fit with potential therapists. Ask about availability, fees, if they accept your health insurance, and how they would work with you.