

Grief and Mourning

The terms grief and mourning are often used interchangeably, despite having different meanings.

Grief is a natural process that is painful, personal, and normal. Grief allows a person to come to terms with a significant loss, and make sense of their new reality without a loved one. In most cases, grief will resolve itself with the passage of time, and psychotherapy is unnecessary.

Grief is a personal, internalised psychological process that is unique to each individual and can occur after a death or loss. Unlike mourning, which is an outward expression, grief may or may not be outwardly expressed. When someone is in the midst of grieving, their brain begins processing their emotional responses and re-organizing their new reality. This can be incredibly exhausting and can lead to feeling fatigued, mentally foggy, and somewhat disconnected from reality. When someone is grieving, they are internally processing a loss.

Other times, grief can become complicated and fail to resolve. The bereaved may be consumed by their loss for years afterwards. In these cases, grief therapy may be warranted.

The **Grieving Process Info Sheet** is designed to help you with the grief process, and what it is like when that process gets derailed. This handout will define grief, normalise the process, and explain when it might be time to seek help for grief.

Mourning is an external process that may or may not be a genuine expression of grief. While grief tends to be private and an internalised expression of a loss, mourning is what others see externally. Mourning may include religious, cultural, spiritual, and/or community based traditions surrounding a loss, personal family death rituals or traditions, and unique individual practices.

After a death, survivors are left to face the pain of grief, and a new world without their loved one. Mourning is the process of adapting to loss through the completion of four tasks. Keep in mind that adapting does not mean forgetting—it means finding a way to cherish the memories of a loved one, while continuing to move forward in life.

Mourning can help those who are grieving feel communal support, which is an important aspect of processing grief-related emotions. Mourning, to some, may feel healing, offer closure, and provide more of an official mark to the loss.

The **Goodbye Letter** is an opportunity to describe who you are grieving, special memories with that person, and lessons learned from the relationship. The aim of this grief worksheet is to build positive meaning associated with the lost relationship, and to begin moving toward closure. This worksheet will be helpful for people who have difficulty talking openly about their loss.

Resources:

Guidelines for Caregivers

My Stages of Grief

The Stages of Grief

Tasks of Mourning

Goodbye Letter

The Grieving Process

Grief Sentence Completion

Understanding My Grief

Why I miss you

How I am experiencing the stages of grief

Coping with grief and loss

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>

Grief vs Mourning: Understanding the differences

<https://dying.lovetoknow.com/ideas-advice-coping-grief/grief-vs-mourning-understanding-differences>