



LeVa

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# When you're grieving

## What is grief?

Grief is a natural response to loss. It's the emotional suffering you feel when something or someone you love is taken away. The more significant the loss, the more intense the grief will be.

## Everyone deals with grief differently

There is no right or wrong way to experience grief.

You may feel like you're going crazy, feel like you're in a bad dream, question your religious beliefs, feel many emotions such as anger, hurt, betrayal, blame, shame/whakama and disbelief. It is completely normal to feel these emotions and others – you are grieving.

The grieving process takes time. Healing happens gradually. It can't be forced or hurried—and there is no “normal” timetable for grieving. Some people start to feel better in weeks or months, for others it's years. Whatever your grief experience, it's important to be patient with yourself and allow the process to naturally unfold.

## What does grief look like?

Many people experience different emotions following a loss. The five stages of grief that people commonly experience are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Experience, and Acceptance. Not everyone goes through all of these stages in order to heal. For some people this is what grief might look like:

- ✘ **Shock and disbelief** – Right after a loss, it can be hard to accept what happened. You may feel numb, have trouble believing that the loss really happened, or even deny the truth. If someone you love has died, you may keep expecting him or her to show up, even though you know he or she is gone.
- ✘ **Sadness** – Profound sadness is probably the most universally experienced symptom of grief. You may have feelings of emptiness, despair, yearning, or deep loneliness. You may also cry a lot or feel emotionally unstable.
- ✘ **Guilt** – You may regret or feel guilty about things you did or didn't say or do. After a death, you may even feel guilty for not doing something to prevent the death, even if there was nothing more you could have done.
- ✘ **Anger** – Even if the loss was nobody's fault, you may feel angry and resentful. If you lost a loved one, you may be angry with yourself, God, the doctors, or even the person who died for abandoning you. You may feel the need to blame someone for the injustice that was done to you.
- ✘ **Fear** – A significant loss can trigger a host of worries and fears. You may feel anxious, helpless, or insecure. You may even have panic attacks. The death of a loved one can trigger fears about your own mortality, of facing life without that person, or the responsibilities you now face alone.
- ✘ **Physical symptoms** – including fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss or weight gain, aches and pains, and insomnia.



## Coping with grief

### Get support

Take time and space to nurture yourself and others. The single most important factor in healing from loss is having the support of other people.

- ✘ **Sharing with other people** can reduce the sense of isolation and loneliness that comes with grief.
- ✘ **Allow people to help you** – Don't be embarrassed to accept their help. You will be able to help someone else at another time. It is your turn now.
- ✘ **Talk to family and friends** – Sharing memories and stories, thoughts and feelings can be comforting and strengthen your connection with your loved one.
- ✘ **Connect** – Spend time with positive people in your life.
- ✘ **Communicate** with others all the time, especially if things' aren't going well.
- ✘ **Pray** if you draw comfort from your faith - go to church for more support.

### Take care of you

- ✘ **Exercise** – Do something to use pent-up energy, e.g. go jogging, boxing, walking, swimming, cycling.
- ✘ **Find ways to relax** – Get a massage. Go to the movies with mates. Just hang.
- ✘ **Connect** with our emotions through music, art, sport or writing. Write a letter or a poem about how you are feeling.
- ✘ **Get enough sleep** – Limit alcohol and caffeine, exercise and maintain a routine at bed time.
- ✘ **Talk to someone you trust** – Feeling and expressing your emotions and thoughts with someone is an important part of healing.
- ✘ **Go easy on yourself** – Let yourself feel whatever you feel without embarrassment or judgment. It's okay to be angry, to yell at the heavens, to cry or not to cry. It's also okay to laugh, to find moments of joy, and to let go when you're ready.

## When grief doesn't go away

It's normal to feel sad, numb, or angry following a loss. But as time passes these emotions should become less intense. If you aren't feeling better over time, it may be a sign that your grief has developed into a more serious problem. It's OK to say you are struggling and ask for help.

### Where can I find help?

**1737 Need to Talk** – free call or text 1737

**Depression Helpline** – 0800 111 757

**Youthline** – 0800 376 633, free text 234  
or email [talk@youthline.co.nz](mailto:talk@youthline.co.nz)

**Lifeline** – 0800 543 354 or (09) 5222 999 within Auckland

**[www.leva.co.nz](http://www.leva.co.nz)** – for resources and information

**[www.auntydee.co.nz](http://www.auntydee.co.nz)** – free online support tool

**[www.mentalwealth.nz](http://www.mentalwealth.nz)** – for information to feel good, live well and be connected

**[www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)** – includes The Journal online help service

**[www.thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.thelowdown.co.nz)** – visit the website, email [team@thelowdown.co.nz](mailto:team@thelowdown.co.nz) or free text 5626

**[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)** – for resources and information

**[www.skylight.org.nz](http://www.skylight.org.nz)** – for resources and information

