

## What is Grief?

**Grief** is an emotion experienced when coping with loss. It is the process of coming to acceptance of what was or what could have been, but is no longer. As Christians, grief points to the brokenness of this world that involves pain, suffering, loss, and hardship; it is a reminder that we are not yet in heaven.

While grief is often connected to the loss of a person, there are many different things you can grieve – loss of a dream, house, job, church, community, lifestyle, physical ability, or a pet. Grieving something less common can make you feel like you have to explain your grief and that no one understands, making the process more complicated.

### Grieving vs. Mourning

Some form of your grief will likely always be with you, and won't be completed by checking steps off a list. The emotions associated with grief are not linear, but can feel scattered or circular. Many find it helpful to view grief as a journey, and while you might never be "over" the loss, the emotions will most likely get less intense as you move toward healing. Learn more about grief on the right.

**Mourning** is the physical expression of grief and an important part of the process. Integrating grieving with mourning allows for a whole body experience. It is important to set aside time to listen to your body and be attuned to what you need. Ideas for physical expressions of grief include:

- Writing a letter
- Starting a new tradition to honor the loss
- Crying
- Visiting a gravesite
- Sharing what you're experiencing with someone who feels safe

Grief looks different for everyone, and you may even deal with grief differently in different seasons of life. Give yourself grace, ask for help, and find ways to honor what you are grieving. It can be tempting to erase what has been lost, but rather look for ways to integrate grief into a new way of living. Think you might need some additional support? Here are some signs:

- Your coping mechanisms or emotions are damaging current relationships or responsibilities
- Your symptoms have not improved or changed over an extended period of time (a year or more), despite support from family and friends

You may have heard of the 5 stages of grief based on research done in the 1960s by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Since then, there have been many studies that have proven a more accurate grief experience.

One particular model is the *Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement*. This model shows 2 groups of experiences, loss oriented and restoration oriented, and a person oscillates back and forth between the two as they grieve. This model honors the practical things that one must do while also leaving space for the emotions that come with loss.

### EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCE

#### Loss-Oriented

Grief Work  
 Intrusion of Grief  
 Relinquishing-continuing-relocating bonds /ties  
 Denial/avoidance of restoration changes

#### Restoration-Oriented

Attended to life changes  
 Doing new things  
 Distraction from grief  
 Denial/avoidance of grief  
 New roles/identities /relationship

Email [info@gracecounselingcenter.org](mailto:info@gracecounselingcenter.org) to schedule an appointment with a therapist or learn more about **GriefShare**, an open group at Grace Church for those grieving the loss of a loved one.