

Moving Through Grief

Grief is a natural response to loss—whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, a major life change, or another deeply personal experience. It can affect your emotions, thoughts, body, and relationships. There is no timeline and no single "right" way to grieve.

COMMON EXPERIENCES OF GRIEF

Grief often shows up in different ways over time:

Emotional: sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, relief, or numbness

Physical: fatigue, headaches, tightness in the chest, changes in sleep or appetite

Cognitive: difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, disbelief, or confusion

Social: withdrawing from others or, at times, needing more connection than usual

You may feel fine one moment and overwhelmed the next. These shifts are normal.

THE GRIEVING PROCESS

You may have heard of the "stages of grief" (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance), first described by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. While helpful for understanding emotions, grief is not a straight path. You might revisit feelings multiple times or experience them in a different order, or not at all.

WAYS TO COPE AND HEAL

- **Give yourself permission to grieve-** Don't rush or compare your process to others. Your pace is valid.
- **Express your feelings-** Talk with someone you trust, journal, create art, or spend time in reflection.
- **Stay connected-** Even small moments with supportive people can reduce isolation.
- **Create routines-** Gentle structure, like regular meals or walks, can provide stability.
- **Take care of your body-** Sleep, nutrition, and light movement help support emotional resilience.
- **Honor your loss-** Rituals, memory boxes, anniversaries, or acts of kindness can help you stay connected to what you've lost.

WHEN GRIEF FEELS OVERWHELMING

Sometimes grief can feel stuck or all-consuming. You might consider extra support if you notice:

- Persistent inability to function in daily life
- Intense hopelessness or prolonged numbness
- Withdrawing completely from others
- Using substances to cope

Reaching out to a mental health professional, grief counselor, or support group can make a meaningful difference.

There is no finish line in grief, no moment where everything suddenly feels "back to normal." Instead, there is a gradual softening—a learning to carry your loss with more ease and less pain. Be patient with yourself in this process. You are doing the best you can, and that is enough. With time, support, and compassion, light will begin to find its way back in.



If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further please contact [Cyndie Gilliam LMFT TANF](mailto:Cyndie.Gilliam@LMFT.TANF)
Therapist @ [760-330-3913](tel:760-330-3913) or cgilliam@sctca.net

Resources to Support Your Move through Grief

The Elizabeth Hospice: Grief Support

Serving San Diego & Southwest Riverside Counties. Free or sliding-scale (for individual sessions) support available to everyone (no patient affiliation required).
Adult Support: Individual counseling and loss-specific groups.
Children's Support (Ages 3-17): Peer-based groups at centers in Escondido and Mission Valley, plus local school campuses.
Contact: Edith Ruiz | (833) 349-2054
Web: elizabethhospice.org/grief-support

The Compassionate Friends (TCF)

They are a national self-help bereavement organization for families going through the natural grieving process after the death of a child. They welcome all bereaved parents (and guardians), grandparents, and adult siblings regardless of the age of the child who died or the cause of death. Their services are free.

TCF San Diego County Chapter Northminster Presbyterian Church

4324 Clairemont Mesa Blvd, San Diego CA 92117
Email: leaders@sdtcf.org
Url: <http://www.sdtcf.org>
Phone Contact: Chapter Phone Line (619) 583-1555
Meeting Info: In-Person: 1st Thursday of each month at 7:00 pm, Virtual: 1st Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm

TCF Orange Coast/Irvine Chapter Lakeview Senior Center

20 Lake Road, Irvine CA 92604
Email: cfirvinechapter@gmail.com
Phone Contact: Jeff (949) 628-9328
Meeting Info: 1st Wednesday of each month 7:00 - 9:00 pm

TCF of West Ventura County Livingston Memorial Offices

1996 Eastman Ave Suite 101, Ventura CA 93003
Email: lauralindsayvta@gmail.com
Phone Contact: Laura (805) 561-3207 or Ana (805) 432-2066
Meeting Info: In Person: Second and Fourth Wednesdays of each month. 6:30-8 pm - To attend, contact Ana Iraola-Baker at (805) 432-2066 or email: anabakercfvta@gmail.com - note new in person meetings.
Online: First and Third Wednesdays of each month, 7:00 - 8:30pm - To attend, please send email to lauralindsayvta@gmail.com requesting ZOOM access to the next meeting - note new email to request ZOOM link for meetings

Indian Health Council Behavioral Health Department

They provide Outpatient Care: individual therapy, group therapy, medication management, and psychological assessments.
<https://www.indianhealth.com/behavioral-health>
They also offer a 3 day Grief and Loss workshop "Mending Broken Hearts". The next one starts on 7/28/26. contact Cabrini Loredo cloredo@indianhealth.com (760)749-1410 ext 5313 to register.

Survivors of Suicide Loss (SOSL)

They provides ongoing, peer-led support groups for anyone who has lost a loved one to suicide. They offer survivors a place where you can be comfortable expressing yourself. It a place to find support, comfort, resources, and hope in a judgment-free environment. These support groups are both online and in-person. . Visit <https://soslsd.org/> for more information and to register for their support groups.

GriefShare

It is a free, international, Christ-centered 13 week support group program designed to help individuals navigate the emotional challenges of losing a loved one to death. Created by the Church Initiative ministry, it operates as a nondenominational program hosted both by local churches and online. For more information and to find a support group visit <https://www.griefshare.org>.

Scripps Grief and Loss Support Groups

This group is ongoing and is free to anyone. It is offered both in person and virtually. The in person sessions are Tuesday evenings - 6 pm - 7 pm at Scripps Mercy Hospital San Diego and the virtual meetings will take place via Zoom on the first and third Tuesday each month from 6 - 7 pm. RSVP by calling 619-260-7020 or email chaplains@scrippshealth.org.

VITAS

Offers virtual support groups and a support session for those trying to manage their grief. Anyone can utilize these services and they are free of charge. The best way to access their program is online at <https://www.vitas.com/family-and-caregiver-support/grief-and-bereavement>. They offer different types of support so check it out online. You can also speak to admin in Orange County at (949) 255-6408 and San Diego County (619)205-8811

Books that might be helpful

- It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand by Megan Devine LPC
- Bearing the Unbearable: Love, Loss, and the Heartbreaking Path of Grief. by Dr. Joanne Cacciatore and Jeffrey Rubin
- When Loss Comes Close to Home: Finding Hope to Carry On When Death Turns Your World Upside Down, by Charlie and Jill LeBlanc
- Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations For Working Through Grief by Martha Whitmore Hickman
- Healing Grief Card Deck: 55 Practices to Find Peace by David Kessler
- The Grief Recovery Handbook. The action program for moving beyond death, divorce and other losses. by John W. James and Russell Friedman

For Children

- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst
- The Memory Box: A Book About Grief by Joanna Rowland
- I Miss You: Grief and Mental Health Books for Kids by Pat Thomas and Lesley Harker
- Grief is a Mess by Jackie Schulz

