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Living with Grief

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If you're a human being, and you have ever loved someone or something ... then you probably know that you've also risked the chance of losing that someone or something. As a friend said to me yesterday, "Nothing is permanent".

When we experience the loss of someone or something, we often grieve that loss. Grief is a normal, natural, inevitable and common experience, yet it is also a very individual experience that affects us physically and mentally. What makes it an individual experience is wide and varied – how we felt about that person or relationship or pet or place or job or career; what other stressors we are also dealing with; what we've been taught about grief; how many experiences we've had of grief; what support we have around us ... the list is infinite.

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The important thing to remember is that grief is a reflection of a connection we've lost, that it's normal to grieve, and that we all grieve differently.

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Grief Reactions

Initially we may experience intense feelings of numbness, denial and shock. These feelings can actually be adaptive – they act like an ‘anesthetic’ for the pain, giving us the energy to deal with everything that needs to be dealt with. Once the ‘anesthetic’ wears off, we often feel sadness, longing, and emptiness. Other common grief reactions are overwhelm, vulnerability, abandonment, helplessness and fear. We can also experience physical symptoms, such as sleeplessness, nightmares, loss of appetite, and loss of pleasure. Other reactions (less common) are anger, betrayal, guilt, shame, disengagement, coldness, bitterness, happiness, or an opening of ‘old’ grief wounds. All of these reactions take time to adjust to.

“The risk of love is loss, and the price of loss is grief – but the pain of grief is only a shadow when compared with the pain of never risking love.” Hilary Stanton Zunin

However, if these strategies aren’t enough, and you’re finding it difficult to adjust to your life after a loss, seeking professional assistance could be useful.

If you would like help in managing your thoughts, feelings or behaviours, please feel free to contact us on 0488 954 195,

amanda@awakenpsychology.com.au or [click here](#)

What Can You Do?

Grief can be described as a feeling of being in a small boat, battered by a huge storm – or the feeling of taking one step forward and being slapped back two steps – or a roller-coaster ride with many ups and downs. However, you could try one, two, three or more of the following things that other people have found useful.

- face your feelings
- take care of yourself – exercise, eat well, sleep well, meditate, relax, get a massage
- keep a diary or journal
- be creative – draw, paint, write a poem, dance
- write a letter to express how you feel
- defer major decisions for 6-12 months, if practical
- share with others how you feel – that may be with family, friends or a support group
- plan ahead for grief ‘triggers’, such as anniversaries, holidays, and milestones
- develop your own way to honour your loss – light a candle, listen to music, make a special place to think

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