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6 Things You Need To Know About Grief and Loss

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Grief is the normal and natural response to loss, and it can be experienced at any time during our lives. Loss can include such things as the death of a loved one, the ending of a relationship, a tragic event in the community, or an unexpected change in lifestyle. While some people may recover quickly after a loss, others may experience a longer road to recovery. Following are 6 things you need to know about grief and loss, and some information that may help your wellbeing after experiencing a loss.

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1. It's important to **acknowledge your loss**. Some people downplay their loss, and therefore do not acknowledge or even deny their grief. However, it is important to accept that you have experienced a loss, and to give yourself permission to have a reaction.
2. Having **support** after a loss is vital; so seek the support of others you trust. You may find you need to talk often about your loss, or that just having company is enough. Make sure you choose someone you trust and someone that can be there for you.
3. **Routines** are important, as loss can often throw everyday routines out. And while it may be difficult as you're feeling stressed and you've got so much else to deal with; eating a

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healthy diet, exercising and sleeping well, using relaxation strategies, and not overusing alcohol or drugs will also help in your wellbeing after loss.

4. It's important to **understand** how loss can affect you. Some people have strong thoughts, feelings or physical reactions after a loss.

Feelings can include sadness, anger, anxiety, disbelief, panic, relief or even numbness. Your feelings may be steady and consistent, all over the place, completely overwhelming and consuming, or you may avoid them altogether.

Thoughts can also be affected during grief. You may think you are going crazy, that you will never get over this, that it's unfair, or that you wished it happened to someone else. This is a natural expression of pain and sadness.

Physically you may feel exhausted, have general aches and pains, lose or gain weight, feel nauseous, or have difficulties sleeping.

However, know that it's okay (and normal) to experience these things in the short term after a traumatic experience.

5. Grief has different **stages**. It can be useful to understand the stages you may experience (see below). However, often it isn't as simple as starting at 'shock and denial' and ending up experiencing a 'return to meaningful life'. People can go through stages quickly, slowly, go back and forth between stages, skip stages, or experience them in a completely different order. So be gentle on yourself during these processes – it could take months, or even years. We all experience grief and loss differently.

Shock/Denial – this can include avoiding the reality of the loss, confusion over what happened or what this means, fear for the future, numbness to experiences, and/or

blame of self or others for the loss

Anger – this is a very natural reaction to loss; you may feel frustrated, anxious, irritable, embarrassed, or even shameful

Depression – you may feel flat, detached from others, overwhelmed, have a lack of energy, or feel helpless

Dialogue/Bargaining – you may want to reach out to others you trust to tell your story to, or you may be seeking some form of hope that the loss is reversible

Acceptance – this often involves understanding the reality of the situation, exploring options, and developing a new plan

Return to Meaningful Life – at this stage you feel more empowered, your self-esteem may be greater, you have a sense of security, and a new meaning in your life – whilst incorporating the loss

6. **Make meaning** of the loss. Finding meaning of the loss can lead to a renewed sense of purpose. After a loss people often reassess their goals, values, and relationships – which can positively influence how they live their life. But understand that this is often the most difficult part of experiencing a loss.

For most people they will feel like their intense thoughts, feelings and physical reactions are getting better after a few weeks. However, if you continue to experience distressing symptoms or feelings, you feel numb or empty, your relationships are becoming problematic, you have little support, or you are increasing your use of drugs or alcohol, 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](#)

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