

# Myths & Facts about Grief

## *“Grief has no schedule”*

**Myth** *The pain will go away quicker if you ignore it.*

**Fact** Attempting to ignore your pain or prevent it from surfacing will only make things worse in the long run. For genuine healing, it is necessary to front your grief and actively work with it.

**Myth** *It is important to “be strong / tough” in the face of loss.*

**Fact** Experiencing sadness, sense of fear, loneliness is a *normal* reaction to loss. Crying is *not* a sign of weakness. You do not have to protect your family or friends by putting on a brave face. Showing your genuine feelings can aid them, and you.

**Myth** *If you do not cry, it means you are not sorry about the loss.*

**Fact** Crying is a normal response to grief and sadness, however it is not the only one. Individuals who do not cry may feel the pain just as deeply as those who do -- they may have other ways of expressing it.

**Myth** *Grief should last approximately a year.*

**Fact** There is no correct or incorrect time parameter for grieving -- how long it takes will vary from individual to individual.

## Common Symptoms of Grief

- Disbelief and shock
- Sadness
- Anger
- Guilt
- Fear
- Physical symptoms

## Coping with Grief and Loss

### **Get Support.**

- Turn to friends and family members.
- Gain comfort from your faith (if you are a spiritual person).
- Join a support group.
- Talk to a counsellor, social worker or psychologist for help.

### **Take care of yourself.**

- Face your feelings.
- Express your feelings in a creative / tangible way (start a journal / if you have lost a loved one, write an open letter to them expressing the things you never got the chance to say to them / create a scrapbook or photo album of memories).
- Maintain and look after your physical health.
- Don't let others tell you how to feel and avoid telling yourself how to feel, also.
- Plan ahead for 'grief triggers' (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays – reawakening points for memories).

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## The Difference Between Grief and Depression

Stating the difference between grief and clinical depression is not always a simple task as they share many symptoms. However, there are ways to spot the differences.

**Grief** can be a roller-coaster -- it involves a wide variety of emotions and a mix of good and bad days. Even when an individual is in the middle of the grieving process, they will have instances of pleasure or happiness.

With **depression**, on the other hand, the feelings of despair and emptiness are a constant.

Other symptoms that suggest depression, not only grief, are:

- An intense, pervasive sense of guilt
- Suicidal thoughts, or preoccupation with dying
- A feeling of worthlessness and hopelessness
- Slow body movements and speech
- Inability to function at home, work or school
- Seeing or hearing things that are not there

## Online Help

- |                      |  |              |
|----------------------|--|--------------|
| • <b>Beyond Blue</b> | <a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a> | 1300 224 636 |
| • <b>Lifeline</b>    | <a href="http://www.lifeline.org.au">www.lifeline.org.au</a>     | 131 114      |