

# WHAT IS GRIEF?

My grief is constantly changing. When my Dad first died I felt like a giant hole was left in my heart that could never be filled. As time has passed, the hole has been “stitched together.” Sometimes the stitches are ripped open again, but lately the hole has continued to get smaller. – **Sarah, 19**

Grief for me has definitely changed over time. It’s essentially like a roller coaster ride with lots of ups and downs, twists and turns. You can go for days and maybe weeks feeling great and on top but suddenly something like a picture, a memory or an anniversary comes around and brings you back down. You eventually climb back up. – **Christine, 19**

My mother died on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2008, for most of people it is a normal day on the calendar, sometimes near Easter and all the festivities surrounding it, but for me it marks the turning point of my life, from which my life received the biggest obstacle that I had to overcome. – **Jonathan, 23**

The hardest thing about her death is having to get on with my life without her there to give me advice and share gossip. And forgetting her face. I hate that the most, I think. – **Heather, 17**

I'm fifteen now, and my dad died when I was thirteen. The toughest part for me was that I was unable to say goodbye to my dad. He died very suddenly while he was at our cottage alone. To overcome this, I tried to find any silver lining in this mess. My dad was happy when he died and was in a place that he loved and that he shared with me. Knowing that helped me deal with my grief. – **Will, 15**

Grief is a...  
Fire burning  
Girl walking down a dark, stormy, rainy street carrying a white umbrella  
Child swinging alone while sighing and thinking  
Heart with gaping hole, with a small line of stitches starting to form  
Grave stone  
– **teens in Victoria, BC**

## HOW HAS GRIEF CHANGED YOU?

Losing a loved one has changed me in many ways. Including making me appreciate every little thing I have in my life. – **Meena, 16**

I am much more mature than many of my peers. For me, it was as if I skipped being a teenager and just woke up one day as an adult. – **Sarah, 19**

It made me open my eyes and see the world in a different light. Also, more than anything, it showed me how to live. Live out each day like you will never have another. – **Heather, 17**

I have become a bit more mature. I have grown. I take care of my mom now sometimes. In a way I have become stronger and more determined. I am going to live my life while it lasts. – **Kiriana, 13**

Losing my dad has made me who I am today. I believe I am a much stronger person (emotionally) and I have discovered that I can get through anything life throws my way. I think from this journey thus far I have learnt to embrace every day as special and to cherish those around me because the unthinkable can happen to anyone. You must live as if you only have today. – **Christine, 19**



# WHAT IS GRIEF?

### WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED?

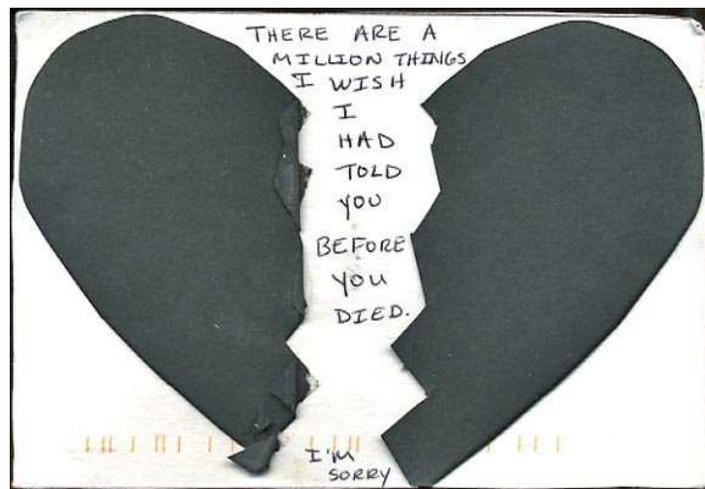
As time passes you will learn how to handle your sadness better and will feel much less broken, but at the same time you forget things like how the person smelled or sounded and that can be equally as hard. – **Sarah, 19**

- The pain of losing a loved one never goes away no matter what you do
- Everyone experiences grief
- There is no set time to get over grief
- There is no right or wrong time or place to feel sad
- It's never easy, but it is not impossible – **teens in Victoria, BC**

One thing I have learned is that you can never replace that relationship. However, you develop friendships that fulfill different roles; a friend to trust your secrets to, a friend to laugh with, a friend to cry with, etc. There is also no expiry date to grief and death is not something you will get over. 5 years later, I still hurt and although it's not a constant and overwhelming grief like it was in the beginning, little parts of grief still come up and hit me when I least expect it. – **Christine, 19**

I learned that grief takes time. – **Jonathan, 23**

Some people say that you should be over it after a certain amount of time. The truth is, you never “get over it.” However you also won't be sad forever- it does get easier. – **Sarah, 19**



“Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you knows how great the hurt is. No one but you can know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.”

-Helen Steiner Rice



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Marie Abbott, 2010

# WHAT IS GRIEF?

## Voices of Youth

A resource on grief for youth by youth

"Grief is what you think and feel on the inside when someone you love dies. It's numbness, sadness, anger, guilt, and sometimes relief, all rolled up into one. It's a pain in your gut and a hole in your chest.

Mourning is expressing your grief, letting it out somehow. You mourn when you cry, talk about the death, write about it, punch a pillow. Everybody grieves inside when someone they love dies. But only people who mourn really heal and move on to live and love fully again. " - Alan Wolfelt, *Healing Your Heart for Grieving Teens*

### Things to Know about Grief

- ❖ Grief is normal
- ❖ There is no "right" or "wrong" way to grieve
- ❖ There is no single definition of grief
- ❖ Grief is a process, not an event
- ❖ Grief has no timeline

### Each Person's Grief is Unique

Your relationship with the person who died was different than that person's relationship with anyone else.

There is nothing "wrong" with you if you think you are responding to the death differently from other people around you.

Everyone's grief is unique: no two people experience loss in the exact same way.

Your response to the death of someone close will depend on:

- your age
- the age of the person who died
- what the relationship was to the person who died
- how close you were to that person
- the cause of death (sudden or expected)
- your family circumstances
- what else is happening in your life at the time
- any previous experience of death or trauma
- your coping skills
- what kind of support you receive from others
- your cultural, religious and/or spiritual beliefs
- your unique personality

Some deaths may have a stigma – suicide, drug overdose, murder, aids, for example. Society may respond differently to these losses and sympathy is not always as readily available from others.

*Grief takes as long as it takes*

- Helen Fitzgerald

"Time goes on, and your life is still there, and you have to live it. After a while you remember the good things more often than the bad. Then, gradually, the empty silent parts of you fill up with the sounds of talking and laughter again, and the jagged edges of sadness are softened by memories"

- Lois Lowry, *'A Summer to Die'*



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# WHAT IS GRIEF?

## COMPONENTS OF GRIEF

### PHYSICAL

Deep sighing  
Weakness  
Exhaustion  
Rapid heartbeat  
Difficulty breathing  
Changes in sleep patterns  
Changes in appetite  
Weight fluctuation  
Feeling restless  
Increased sensitivity to sudden, loud noises

### EMOTIONAL

Numbness      Confusion  
Sadness      Disbelief  
Shock      Dazed  
Anger      Guilt  
Fear      Envy  
Panic      Relief  
Anxiety      Shame  
Loneliness      Depression  
Yearning      Bitterness  
Hopelessness      Peacefulness

I went from feeling guilty, to anger, to sadness, feeling powerless to do something right, feeling powerless to have prevented the horrors I have lived, I felt lonely (as if no one could ever understand me), I felt embarrassed (mainly because suicide is not well viewed by society). Concisely, I experienced almost all emotions that are known to a person. – **Jonathan, 23**

I have felt angry and sad. I have felt lonely and depressed. I have felt confused and tired. I have felt lost and unexplained. But I don't have most of those feelings anymore. I miss him, but I hold on to the things we did together, not the fact that he died. – **Kiriana, 13**

It was anger in the beginning, I recall. Pure, unbridled rage that filled my soul with hate for the world. I cursed my sister. I cursed my family. I cursed the Gods, and I cursed myself. After a few years, that bubbling anger calmed into a tamer fire, allowing the rise of a range of other emotions. Pity, distress, depression, fear, loneliness, questioning, and guilt, to name but a few. – **Heather, 17**

There are no words to even describe how this has affected my life. I could tell you all the physical things I have noticed; trouble with friends, family, relationships, on medication now, emotionally drained, but to really dig in deep, to read my thoughts, sometimes I don't even know. – **Krista, 21**

### BEHAVIOURAL

Disorientation  
Withdrawal  
Wanting to spend time alone  
Difficulty concentrating  
Forgetful  
Crying  
Apathy about the future  
Blaming others  
Difficulty making decisions  
Change in performance level at school

### SOCIAL

Changes in relationships with family and/or friends.

### SPIRITUAL

Loss of faith, questioning previous beliefs  
Interest in other faith traditions  
Discovery of faith or a spiritual understanding

