



## Grief Timeline

There's a common conception that grieving has some kind of time limit - anywhere from a few weeks to a few months. Our workplaces, our friends, even some family members give us these messages. It's also common for folks to assume that the first year after someone dies is the "most difficult". We want to emphatically say **neither of these is true!**

How one grieves a loss is unique for each of us - everyone moves through it differently. So the length of time varies, depending on the person, his/her way of dealing with challenges, and the dynamics of the relationship he/she had with the person that died. Some people are not able to get in touch with the depth of their feelings for quite a while after the death. Others are almost immediately devastated and struggle to accomplish their day to day routine. Still others are thrust into taking on more responsibilities after a death, making it difficult to attend to their own emotional needs for quite a while.

Another common misunderstanding surrounds the "five stages of grief." Those were developed by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross to describe the stages of dying when one is confronted with their own imminent death. These stages often confuse people as they feel they should be "in a certain stage" or "moving through stages" as part of their grieving. We want to emphasize that there are no "stages of grief." There are a number of common reactions to death (difficulty concentrating, short-term memory loss, sudden and sometimes unprovoked waves of sadness or anger, etc.), but even these are experienced differently by different people. There is no one right or wrong way to grieve.

When a death is compounded by additional stressors, such as financial difficulties, it is very stressful and adds to the emotional impact. It is common for feelings to "leak into other things." This "leaking" occurs even when there aren't additional stressors to take into consideration.

Losing someone close to us is a life altering occurrence. What you're going through is normal, no matter how horrible it may feel. You'll grieve in your own way, and your own time. We encourage you to be gentle with yourself, take time for yourself, and talk to your friends about what you're feeling and thinking. Counseling may also help you find the balance and clarity you seek.

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