



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
MINISTRY OF FAMILY AND
SOCIAL SERVICES

BEREAVEMENT IN ADULTS and LIVING WITH GRIEF



Prepared in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services and UNICEF.

What Happens During the Grief Process?

During the grief process, a person tries to cope with negative feelings and thoughts, accept death, and adapt to life again. In the early stages, having difficulty in grasping death and being unable to react to death, freezing, or denying death might be the case. Later on, anger and irritability might be seen instead.



In the next stage, thoughts such as "If I did it this way, maybe ... would be alive" might arise. Lastly, even though the grief and longing that occurred after the death continues, life starts going back to normal with the gradual acceptance of death.

The intensity of the reactions decreases over time, plans for the future are made, and feelings get better. Learning to live with loss and grief does not mean forgetting or getting used to the absence of the deceased.



The following reactions are the usual reactions to the sudden and unexpected death of a loved one.

The Most Common Reactions to Loss

Physical reactions:

- ✓ Headache, stomachache or back pain, tiredness,
- ✓ Changes in the sleeping schedule (Insomnia, excessive sleeping, not being able to fall asleep, waking up at night frequently)
- ✓ Increase in or loss of appetite,
- ✓ Tension, anxiety, restlessness
- ✓ Shortness of breath, chest pain, heart palpitations, muscle tensions/twitches, etc.

Emotional reactions:

- ✓ Freezing, not accepting the death, not feeling anything,
- ✓ Having intense emotions such as sadness, anger, and fear; loneliness, pessimism, desperation, reluctance and hopelessness towards life
- ✓ Feeling guilty about not being able to prevent the death of the loved one or surviving,
- ✓ Having regrets about the things that were or were not done regarding the deceased,
- ✓ Wanting to be with the deceased, feeling that it is not fair, etc.



Mental reactions:

- ✓ Having intense thoughts about not getting to say goodbye,
- ✓ Having intense thoughts about recent experiences, regrets, and longing,
- ✓ Having difficulties in memorizing and focusing,

Behavioral reactions:

- ✓ Not being able to cry or crying constantly,
- ✓ Quick temper, acting aggressively,
- ✓ Behaviors of self-harm,
- ✓ Decrease in problem-solving skills,
- ✓ Disruption of interpersonal relationships,
- ✓ Postponement, delay, or fail to complete responsibilities at home, work, and school,
- ✓ Avoiding places or not being able to leave people, conversations, or activities that remind them of the deceased person, or talking too much about the deceased person,
- ✓ Use of or increase in the addictive substances



Suggestions to Help You Live with Loss

- You might feel that your world is turning upside down right after the loss you have experienced. In such situations, you should try to return to your daily routine gradually. You should slowly start trying to take care of your work tasks or housework, eat regularly, and sleep. Pay attention to your health and self-care.
- Talk to people you trust, relatives, or those who have experienced similar losses about the situation and share your pain. Talking to your family or friends, getting understood and supported in a difficult time, will be of great help to you.



- When you come across events, places, photographs, or belongings that remind you of the deceased, try to face it by spreading it over weeks, when you feel ready. You can remove the photographs whenever you want or look at them when you are ready to recall your memories.



- You can give away or store the clothes and belongings of the person that you lost whenever you are ready.
- You can attend the funeral and express condolences as much as possible, pray after the deceased according to your religious beliefs, and fulfill your religious duties.
- At first, it is normal for your attention and thoughts to gravitate towards what happened in the past (what you did, what you couldn't do, what was done to you). In the upcoming period, you can direct your attention and thoughts to the things that you have to do at the present time and in the future.
- Try to be patient with yourself and your relatives.
- Everyone can experience grief differently. While some get very introverted or cry, some focus on their work and never cry. Be understanding of others and their own ways to experience grief. Make an effort to spend this process with respect and love by creating environments to talk to each other.





- Think about how you overcame the difficulties so far. Remember how you dealt with problems and pain before.
- Even if the loss you suffer is above anything else, remind yourself how you survived other difficulties and managed to stand tall.
- Do not ignore your strength.
- Remember that you cannot control every event and that death is inevitable.

Do not hesitate to seek help from a mental health professional if you feel desperate and have problems coping.



Suggestions to Help Your Grieving Relative:

DON'T'S!

- Different people might have different perceptions and feelings about their loss and different ways of grieving. Therefore, do not compare the grief of a person with others. Do not compare losses and pain.
- Do not ignore death or underestimate the grief just to help.
- Try not to use words that might undervalue the loss, such as "time heals all wounds", "this too shall pass", "please don't cry anymore", or "everything will be fine".
- Do not give recommendations or advice to the grieving person. Do not use expressions such as "Come on, you have to be strong, may God protect you from worse, you should not be so weak, you are the head of this house now, ... watches you and is getting upset right now".
- After the disaster and emergency, people's property such as their houses, cars, workplaces, household goods, vineyards/gardens may have been damaged. Try not to use expressions such as "Let the goods go, you will work, and you will earn it again" regarding financial loss.



You should pay attention to the following if you will be delivering the bad news:

- Make sure that they are informed about the death openly and without any delay.
- Before delivering the news, try to arrange a safe place where they can react and sit comfortably.
- Be prepared to meet their needs such as water, napkins, and medications for chronic illnesses.
- If possible, try to have a healthcare professional present with you if they have a chronic illness or are elderly.
- Make sure that there are other family members and relatives with you who can support them.
- You can start by saying things such as “I have some sad news. Unfortunately...”
- Provide accurate, short, and clear information about death. In deaths involving shocking images, be careful not to describe the event in too much detail.
- Try to patiently answer repetitive questions.
- Be with them, share their grief and sadness.



Suggestions to Help Your Grieving Relative:

DO'S!

- Listen to them and be close to them. Let them talk about it, cry, get angry, or however they want to react.
- Use past tense in conversations about the deceased to help the relatives accept death.
- During the grieving period, they will want to tell memories regarding the deceased relative or their financial and emotional loss over and over again.
- They will tell less and less with time. Patiently listen to them and make them feel that you are with them.
- Instead of making them remove belongings of the deceased immediately, allow time to face them over time.
- Take care of their children or those they provide care for, be in solidarity. Support them in issues related to the nutrition, routines at home, material and spiritual needs of their own and of those they provide care for.
- People with a loss who are going through a period of grief might be prone to make sudden and big decisions such as having another child, remarrying, moving, and starting a business. Encourage them to wait for a while to make big decisions, if possible.
- The person might turn to addictive substances to relieve the pain of the loss. You can talk to them about the negative consequences this situation might have in the future.
- You can encourage them to return to work life if they are working individuals, to attend school if they are students, or to adopt a hobby in line with their interests if they are unemployed or retired.



When To Consult A Mental Health Professional?

- If the severity of the bereavement reactions is not gradually decreasing after some time,
- If they experience intense emotions such as worthlessness, guilt, hopelessness, and fear intensive enough to affect their daily life,
- If insomnia, excessive weight loss, or weight gain continue,
- If distraction and forgetfulness lead to serious mistakes,
- If they cannot meet their basic needs such as eating, drinking, bathing and cannot carry out routines to maintain their health,
- If they have thoughts of self-harm or harming others,

A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE CONSULTED IMMEDIATELY.





Remember!

You can seek help from psychosocial support staff deployed in times of disaster and emergency through Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Services.



**REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
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**FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT APPLICATION AND
REFERRAL IN CASE OF NEED:**

..... Provincial Directorate of Family and Social Services

Address:

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Tel: