



THE EAP CONNECTION

Understanding and Coping with Grief

When we think of grief, death is what typically comes to mind. However, grief is ultimately the experience of loss. It may involve death, but it can also be from divorce, termination of a job, the end of a friendship, change in physical health, or even the realization that a goal can no longer be met. Grief can be a part of more positive life experiences, too. Common milestones or changes, whether expected or unexpected, such as graduating school, getting married, or moving to a new home, can come with mixed emotions, including grief.

Everyone experiences grief differently. It can manifest in physical, mental, spiritual, cognitive, and behavioral ways. There is no specific timeline that grief follows and no right or wrong way to grieve. It's not helpful to compare yourself to others since your experience is unique to you.

Grief is a very natural response to the experience of loss and is something that all of us will experience during our lifetimes. Learning how to cope with grief in healthy ways is important. Here are a few strategies to keep in mind:

- Allow yourself to feel the feelings. Grief can be confusing because it can surface a variety of emotions. Simply identifying and being aware of what you are feeling in the moment can be powerful.
- Focus on the basics. Sleep, hydration, and nutrition may be challenging enough when experiencing grief, but it's important to take care of yourself.
- Find self-care outlets that give you time for rest, relaxation, or even enjoyment.
- Give yourself plenty of grace and patience! Grieving is hard work, so be kind to yourself.
- Use your support system. You may have specific, logistical things that people could help you accomplish, or you may need emotional support from safe, caring people. There are many helpful resources online and in your local community. If it interests you, consider joining a grief group for support.
- Lean into healthy coping strategies. Consider the following ways to help navigate grief: journaling, reading about grief, talking about your feelings, being creative with self-expression, and finding ways to give back to others.
- Recognize when you need more support, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

Grief is one of the top-ten reasons that clients use their mental health benefit through ERC. If you are struggling with a loss, reach out to your EAP for free and confidential mental health counseling.