



Grief Support Groups

Finding understanding, connection, and a place to belong

After someone you love dies, the world can feel unfamiliar. People around you may care deeply, yet you may still feel alone in what you are experiencing. A grief support group can offer a place to be heard, speak your loved one's name, and spend time with people who understand loss from their own experience.

Why being with others who grieve can help

No one can know exactly how your grief feels. Each relationship, loss, and life story is different. Yet other grieving people often recognize something familiar in your words: the longing, the quiet house, the unexpected tears, or the difficulty facing another day. That shared understanding can bring comfort without requiring a long explanation.

Hearing someone describe a feeling you have struggled to put into words can help you think, “I am not the only one.” Shared experiences can reduce isolation and help you recognize that many unfamiliar feelings are part of grieving, rather than a personal failure. A group can also offer practical ideas for coping with difficult days. There is no single way or timetable for grief.

When the first meeting feels scary

Walking into a room of strangers while you are hurting can feel overwhelming. You may wonder: Will I have to talk? What if I cry? Will hearing other stories be too much? Will I belong? These concerns are understandable. You do not have to feel confident before taking a first step.

Formats vary. A meeting may include introductions, a discussion topic, grief education, or time to share. Before attending, ask the facilitator what happens during a typical session. In a respectful group, you should be able to listen, pass when invited to speak, and share only what feels comfortable. Tears, silence, and even moments of laughter can all have a place.

You do not need the right words. Sometimes, simply being in a room where your grief is welcome is a meaningful beginning.

Resource references: Hospice Foundation of America, “When you are grieving” (hospicefoundation.org/when-you-are-grieving/); Hospicare, “Grief Support” (hospicare.org/grief-support/). Group offerings vary. The three-meeting suggestion is Linda Findlay's practice guidance.





Giving Connection a Chance

Consider three meetings before deciding

Linda Findlay encourages people to try at least three meetings before deciding a support group is not for them. The first visit may feel unfamiliar; later visits can help you get to know the people, the format, and how you feel afterward. This is a gentle suggestion, not a requirement. If you feel pressured, judged, or unsafe, you can leave or choose another group.

If a group does not feel right now, it does not mean it will never help. Your needs may change in the months or years ahead. You can revisit the idea later, try a group for your particular loss, or explore a different format. Choosing another kind of support is also valid.

Connection can continue beyond the meeting

Some members choose to meet for coffee, take a walk, or share dinner outside the group. Companionship can make everyday life feel less lonely. Some people develop lasting, even lifelong, friendships. Let these connections grow at your own pace, respect others' boundaries, and exchange contact information only by mutual choice.

Know what is available in your community

Contact local hospices, funeral homes, community centers, faith communities, or bereavement organizations. Many hospices offer community grief groups even when your loved one did not receive hospice care. Ask about eligibility, fees, registration, and current schedules. Some also offer annual remembrance services or other opportunities to honor loved ones; ask who may attend.

Facebook groups and Meetup listings can help you discover online communities and local gatherings. Some offer discussion posts; others arrange video meetings or in-person events. Check who organizes the group, how it is moderated, and whether its focus matches your needs. Social media privacy is limited, even in a private group, so be thoughtful about sharing personal details.

Choose a setting where you feel comfortable

For gatherings with people you have not met, choose an established public location with good lighting and easy access. Prefer daylight or earlier meeting times when possible, especially if traveling alone. Verify the organizer and venue, tell someone your plans, and arrange your own transportation. You can decline a private-home invitation or an outing that feels uncomfortable.

Before your first visit, ask: Who leads the group? May I simply listen? What are the privacy expectations? Is it for a specific type of loss? How long is each meeting, and may I bring a support person?

