



MOURNING DISCOVERIES

Common Feelings & Thoughts While Grieving

*Understanding the changing inner experience
of loss*

Grief can bring feelings and thoughts that are intense, unfamiliar, contradictory, or difficult to explain. You may feel one emotion strongly, several emotions at once, or almost nothing at all. These responses do not mean you are grieving incorrectly. They reflect the many ways your heart, mind, body, relationships, and daily life are adjusting to a significant loss.

GRIEF DOES NOT FEEL THE SAME EVERY DAY

Grief rarely moves in a straight line. A day that feels manageable may be followed by a difficult morning, an unexpected memory, or a wave of emotion. Feelings may change from hour to hour. They can also return around holidays, anniversaries, family events, familiar places, music, scents, or ordinary routines once shared with the person who died.

GENTLE REMINDER

There is no correct emotional schedule for grief. What you feel today may not be what you feel tomorrow—and both experiences are valid.

COMMON FEELINGS WHILE GRIEVING

- **Sadness and yearning:** You may ache for the person, miss their voice or presence, and long for life as it was before the death.
- **Shock, disbelief, or numbness:** Even when a death was expected, part of you may still struggle to understand that it has truly happened. Numbness can give the mind a temporary pause from what feels overwhelming.



- **Anger or irritability:** Anger may be directed toward the circumstances, medical professionals, family members, yourself, the person who died, or even God. Sometimes grief appears as impatience or a shorter temper.
- **Guilt and regret:** Thoughts about what you did, did not do, said, or wish you had said can become persistent. Grief often judges the past with information and perspective you did not have at the time.
- **Fear and anxiety:** Loss can make the world feel less safe. You may worry about another death, your health, finances, the future, or how you will manage responsibilities alone.
- **Loneliness:** You can feel lonely even in a room full of caring people because the particular person and relationship you miss cannot simply be replaced.
- **Relief:** Relief may occur after a long illness, caregiving period, painful relationship, or prolonged uncertainty. Relief does not cancel love, loyalty, or grief.

COMMON THOUGHTS WHILE GRIEVING

Grief can also change how you think. Your mind may repeatedly revisit the death, search for explanations, or try to solve questions that have no complete answer. Common thoughts include:

- “This cannot be real.”
- “I should have known, noticed, called, or done more.”
- “Why did this happen?” or “Why them?”
- “How am I supposed to live without this person?”
- “No one truly understands what this feels like.”
- “I should be doing better by now.”
- “If I laugh or enjoy something, does that mean I am forgetting?”
- “What will happen to me or my family now?”

These thoughts can feel convincing because grief is trying to make sense of a world that has changed. A thought is not always a fact. You may find it helpful to gently ask: “Is this completely true, or is this grief, fear, guilt, or exhaustion speaking right now?”

WHEN FEELINGS SEEM TO CONFLICT

Grief can hold opposites. You may feel love and anger, gratitude and sadness, relief and guilt, hope and fear, or connection and loneliness at the same time. You may deeply miss someone while also remembering painful parts of the relationship. Mixed feelings do not make your love less real. They make room for the whole truth of your experience.





YOU ARE ALLOWED TO FEEL MORE THAN ONE THING

Grief does not require you to choose one emotion or explain every reaction. Feelings can coexist without canceling one another.

GENTLE WAYS TO RESPOND TO WHAT YOU FEEL

- **Name it without judging it:** Try saying, “I notice sadness,” “I feel angry,” or “I am having a guilt thought.” Naming an experience can create a little space around it.
- **Lower the expectations for the moment:** Choose the next small task instead of demanding that you manage the whole day at once.
- **Let your body help:** Drink water, eat something nourishing, rest, step outside, stretch, or take several slow breaths. Grief affects the whole person.
- **Share with someone safe:** A trusted person does not need perfect words. Being heard without correction or pressure can be deeply supportive.
- **Write what is circling in your mind:** A private journal, letter, prayer, voice note, or message to the Grief Companion Inbox can help give thoughts somewhere to go.

WHEN TO REACH OUT FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Consider contacting a grief counselor, healthcare professional, faith leader, support group, or trusted person when distress feels unmanageable, daily functioning remains severely disrupted, or you feel increasingly isolated or hopeless. If you are in immediate danger or may harm yourself, call emergency services. In the United States and its territories, call or text 988 for free, confidential crisis support available at any time.

A MOMENT OF REFLECTION

What feeling or thought has been most present for me today—and what might I need in response?

With heartfelt compassion,

Linda Findlay

Founder, Mourning Discoveries

