



DIFFERENT KINDS OF GRIEF

ANTICIPATORY GRIEF

Grieving Before a Death or Major Loss Occurs



WHEN GRIEF BEGINS BEFORE THE GOODBYE

Anticipatory grief can begin when you know, or strongly suspect, that someone you love may die or experience a profound decline. It may develop during serious illness, advanced aging, dementia, or another life-changing condition. You may be grieving changes that are already happening while also fearing what is still to come.

GRIEF CAN BEGIN EARLY You may begin mourning lost abilities, routines, roles, independence, shared plans, or the future you expected long before the death occurs.	LIVING BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR You may hope for more time or improvement while also preparing for the possibility of death. These thoughts can exist together.	CAREGIVING CHANGES THE RELATIONSHIP Appointments, medications, decisions, and daily care can become a large part of the relationship, sometimes leaving little energy for simply being together.	EXHAUSTION IS REAL Long periods of uncertainty and caregiving can affect sleep, concentration, patience, physical energy, and emotional reserves.
GUILT MAY APPEAR You may feel guilty for wishing suffering would end, needing a break, feeling frustrated, or imagining life after the death.	SMALL LOSSES ACCUMULATE Changes in communication, mobility, memory, personality, or shared activities can each bring their own grief.	USE THE TIME THAT IS HERE When possible, meaningful time may include conversation, touch, music, photographs, stories, silence, prayer, or simply being present.	PREPARING IS NOT GIVING UP Learning what to expect, asking questions, making practical plans, or discussing wishes can be acts of care rather than a loss of hope.

Remember This

You may grieve before the death.	Hope and fear can coexist.	Caregiving can be exhausting.	Preparing does not mean giving up.
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GENTLE WAYS TO CARE FOR YOURSELF

Let yourself acknowledge the losses that are already occurring. Accept practical help when it is available. Rest when you can. If there are things you want to say or ask, consider whether this is a meaningful time to do so without pressuring yourself to create a perfect goodbye.

Anticipatory grief does not prevent grief after the death. Knowing that someone may die can prepare you for some practical realities, but it cannot fully prepare your heart for their absence.

“Knowing a goodbye may be coming does not make the love—or the eventual loss—smaller.”

— *Mourning Discoveries*

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