

1

Shock

Shock is an automatic coping mechanism of the body to comprehend grief and the initial disbelief regarding the loss of a friend or loved one. Feelings of shock can be heightened especially if the loss was unexpected.

7 Stages of Grief and Loss

Here are the 7 stages of grief. Whichever stage you might identify yourself at, remember you always have people you can talk to. Whether that's family, friends or a professional.

2

Denial

We often find ourselves in denial to try and avoid coming to terms with our loss. Denial can manifest in many ways; it could be denial that a loved one has passed away, or denial of your own feelings towards your loss.

3

Anger

After bottling up feelings to avoid meeting the inevitable, this can result in an outpouring of anger. Anger could be targeted towards the situation or yourself, as you're not able to change the present. It could also result in an outpouring of anger towards the people around you.

4

Bargaining

Trying to reason with yourself that by doing something differently, it could bring a loved one back. We often think irrationally during this stage, and the word 'if' is used frequently, as our thoughts turn to things we could have done.

5

Depression

You may find yourself going through just one, or all of the above, but finally you will approach the realisation of the situation and allow yourself time to grieve your loss.

6

Testing

During this stage, you may continue to feel signs of depression and hopelessness, but there will be signs of light during the testing stage, where you attempt to find ways to deal with the situation.

7

Acceptance

Acceptance may feel a long way from where you are, but you will get there in the end. Pain may still exist, but it will no longer feel insufferable and you will make plans for the future and enjoy life again.

WHEN GRIEVING A LOSS...

1. I ACKNOWLEDGE I HAVE THE RIGHT TO GRIEVE THIS LOSS. MY FEELINGS TOWARDS THE PERSON OR THING(S) I'VE LOST ARE REAL, SIGNIFICANT, AND NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN ANYONE ELSE'S.
2. I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT MY GRIEF AND I DESERVE THE TIME AND SPACE NEEDED TO PROCESS AND DEAL WITH THE LOSS. I WILL NOT LET OTHERS MINIMIZE THIS NEED OR DEPRIVE ME OF MY RIGHT TO GRIEVE.
3. I UNDERSTAND THERE ARE OTHERS WHO ARE GRIEVING SIMILAR LOSSES. I WILL BE OPEN TO THE POSSIBILITY OF RECEIVING SUPPORT FROM THOSE WHO HAVE HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES.
4. I ACKNOWLEDGE I HAVE THE RIGHT TO RITUALS HONORING AND REMEMBERING MY DECEASED LOVED ONES AND OTHER LOSSES.
5. I CHOOSE TO BE SUPPORTED BY THOSE WHO VALIDATE MY LOSS AND SUPPORT ME IN MY GRIEF. I CHOOSE NOT TO ENGAGE WITH THOSE WHO BELITTLE ME AND TREAT MY FEELING AS INVALID.
6. MY LOSS IS REAL AND I MUST FIND PERSONAL WAYS TO EXPLORE AND EXPRESS MY GRIEF AND EMOTION.
7. I'LL TAKE WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM MY OWN GRIEF AND LOSS AND STRIVE TO SHOW SENSITIVITY TOWARDS THE GRIEF AND LOSS EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS.

Grounding Techniques Menu

Unwanted thoughts, memories, and emotions can pull you away from the present moment. Psychologists sometimes call this 'dissociation' and it is very common, especially in people who have experienced trauma. Grounding techniques are a way of bringing your attention back to the present moment, where you are safe.

Come back to your senses

Using your senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste is a quick and powerful way of bringing your attention back to the moment at hand.



- **5-4-3-2-1 technique:** name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.
- **Water:** splash your face with cold water, run water over your hands, or have a bath or shower.
- **Smells:** smell a strong smell (e.g., chewing gum, essential oils).
- **Grounding object:** carry an object with pleasing sensory properties (e.g., a smooth pebble, a beaded bracelet).

Distract yourself

Dissociation and unwanted thoughts can be persistent. If your mind keeps going to unhelpful places, use distraction to gently bring it back to the present.



- **Nature:** go for a walk outside; watch the clouds; feel the wind on your face.
- **Other people:** call someone; go somewhere else; talk about something different; go 'people watching'.
- **Watch & read:** watch a funny video; read a book.
- **Listen:** use music or a podcast to change your mood.
- **Slow down:** walk somewhere slowly and mindfully, concentrate on each step.

Remind yourself that you are safe

Unwanted memories from the past can make you feel unsafe. Remind yourself that you are safe now.



- **Proof:** carry something that proves you survived (e.g. a photo of something good that has happened since your trauma).
- **Letter:** write a letter reminding yourself of why you are safe now, and carry it with you.
- **Coping statements:** "I survived", "This too shall pass", "This is just a memory", "I am safe now".
- **Then vs. now:** focus on what's different now compared to the time of your trauma.

Offer yourself compassion

You're already feeling bad, so there is no point in making things worse by criticizing yourself. Try offering yourself kindness instead.



- **Be understanding:** "It's no wonder you're feeling frightened because you have just had unwanted memories of the past. You are safe now."
- **Be kind:** what would you say and how you would act towards someone else who was suffering like this?

Use your body

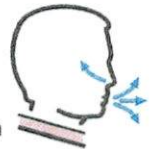
If you feel distressed, you can use your body to help you to come back to the present moment.



- **Change position:** stand up if you were sitting down.
- **Exercise:** do some star jumps, go for a run, or swim.
- **Stretch your body:** reach up and try to touch the sky with your fingertips, then bend down and try to touch the ground.
- **Dance:** move your body to your favourite song.
- **Ground yourself:** press your feet into the floor and literally 'ground' yourself.
- **Hands or feet:** curl your fingers or toes, then release them.

Calm yourself physically

Your body and mind are connected. Use physical soothing techniques to help you to relax.



- **Breathing:** try a relaxed breathing exercise to calm yourself by slowing and deepening your breathing.
- **Muscles:** try a progressive muscle relaxation exercise to calm yourself and release tension, clench and release your fists, allowing tension to drain away as you release.
- **Yoga:** practice yoga or stretching.
- **Exercise:** use physical exercise to release pent-up energy.
- **Connection:** ask someone for a hug, give yourself a butterfly hug, or stroke a pet.

Orient yourself

Dissociation can make you forget *where* and *when* you are. Use grounding to orient yourself in space and time.



- **In space:** remind yourself of *where* you are right now.
- **In time:** remind yourself of *when* it is right now.
- **Relative to your trauma:** remind yourself of where you are now, and how it is different to where and when your trauma happened; remind yourself of what has happened since your trauma happened.

Use your imagination

Your mind can respond to imagined 'things' as powerfully as it does the 'real thing'. Regular practice of the exercises below can help when you need it.



- **Safe place:** do a 'calm place' or 'safe place' exercise, where you imagine being in a soothing place.
- **Compassionate other:** try a 'compassionate other' exercise, where you imagine being in the presence of a perfectly compassionate being who accepts you without judgment.
- **Positive memories:** deliberately think about happier times, places where you felt safe, or people you felt safe with.

Dear _____,

I remember a time we _____

It was fun when _____

I wish we _____

I feel _____

I hope _____

Thank you for _____

DEALING WITH LOSS

