



Adult Grief Reactions

Grief looks different for everyone. Reactions may vary in intensity, timing, and impact, and can affect all areas of life. This list highlights common responses across all age groups. Your experience is valid, regardless of its form.

Cognitive Reactions

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion or disorientation
- Difficulty focusing or making decisions
- Preoccupation with the loss
- Short-term memory loss
- Expecting the deceased to return or call
- Dreams or visions of the deceased
- Replaying events
- Searching to make sense of the loss

Physical Reactions

- Fatigue, exhaustion, low energy
- Sleep disturbances
- Changes in appetite
- Muscle tension or pain
- Headaches, stomach upset, nausea
- Dry mouth
- Shortness of breath or chest tightness
- Rapid heartbeat
- Weight change
- Hypersensitivity to stimuli (sight, sound, smell, touch)
- Increased susceptibility to illness

Social Reactions

- Isolation or feeling distant from others
- Loss of friendships or shifts in relationships
- Feeling misunderstood or judged
- Overdependence or attention-seeking
- Redefining personal identity (e.g., becoming “a widow”)
- Difficulty engaging in conversations

Behavioral Reactions

- Crying or sobbing (often unexpectedly)
- Withdrawal from others or activities
- Avoidance of people, places, or reminders
- Hyperactivity or staying excessively busy
- Outbursts or acting out
- Neglecting hygiene or self-care
- Holding onto belongings or mementos
- Talking to the deceased
- Visiting gravesites or creating memorials
- Using alcohol, drugs, or medications more frequently

Emotional Reactions

- Sadness, numbness, emptiness
- Anger, irritability, mood swings
- Guilt, regret, survivor guilt
- Fear, anxiety, helplessness
- Hopelessness, despair
- Feeling “out of control”
- Yearning or longing
- Emotional “roller coaster”
- Calm or relief
- Desire to join the deceased
- Feelings of betrayal or disloyalty

Spiritual Reactions

- Asking “Why?” or questioning beliefs
- Feeling disconnected from or closer to a higher power
- Seeking meaning in the loss
- Sensing the deceased’s presence
- Wonder, awe, or mystery
- Change in values or spiritual practices

When to Seek Additional Support

- You feel stuck or overwhelmed for an extended period
- Work, school, or daily tasks become difficult to manage
- Sleep, eating, or mood disturbances persist
- You experience a traumatic loss or past grief resurfaces
- You need a safe space to talk without judgment

Gabby’s Grief Center is here to walk with you—wherever you are in your grief.