

C OVID-19 has killed more than 640,000 people in the United States as of September.

However, the losses are more than a count or a statistic; it is a rock tossed into the ocean, unleashing an infinite number of ripples. Many of us may have lost something in the last year and a half: a loved one, a relationship, a career, a habit, a way of life, and perhaps even a sense of purpose.

While we are all suffering collectively, we are not all grieving collectively. Prior to Covid-19, we may choose to alleviate our sadness through a variety of distractions: job, friends and daily responsibilities.

We had a community of human connection with which to unite and support. We are now concealed, separated and divided. How are we to survive in this period of history by delving deeply into our untapped reserves?

While grief is an unwanted guest, if we learn to accommodate it, we may also discover a new, lighter way of life. With the pandemic impacting so many people, grief and the mourning process are receiving a lot of attention these days.

What is sorrow, its symptoms and how long does it last? I will discuss what to expect from grieving in this article, as well as suggestion for navigating the process.

What is grief?

According to the National Library of Medicine, grief is “the natural process of responding to a loss.” It is not a state of being or a single occurrence; rather, it is a journey. “Loss” can refer to a variety of various things. We develop feelings for people, animals, projects and things.

Each lost connection might make us feel helpless. Nonetheless, humans possess an extraordinary ability for enduring loss, regardless of how painful it may be. Different forms of grief hit at varying periods throughout a loss.

For example, immediately following a death or the end of a relationship, you enter an intense mourning phase, yearning for the person who is no longer in your life while struggling with the accompanying emotions, which range from rage and remorse to disbelief. You gradually come to accept and adjust to the loss. Sharp feelings of grief become more distant.

Grief is the natural reaction to a loss. Grief pain enables an emotional processing of the significance of what has been lost and reintegration of the meaning created by the loved one.

What causes grief?

Grief is inextricably linked to the loss of a loved one. However, individuals lament for a variety of reasons. Any type of loss qualifies, including divorce, the death of a pet, the loss of a job, a physical injury or a broken relationship. Grief may also occur at times of change, such as moving to a new house or the first time a child leaves the nest.

There is a distinct type of grief: ambiguous loss, or loss without the certainty of death or genuine closure, which can make initiating the mourning process even more difficult. This is the type of loss that society endured during the pandemic: “We lost faith in the world, we lost the capacity to physically be with friends and we lost our routines”.

While none of these events result in death, they do result in significant loss of control over our own life. This uncertainty may be quite distressing.

Symptoms of grief

Grief may manifest itself in a variety of physical and mental symptoms. “It may

Accepting the unacceptable

Grief may manifest itself in a variety of physical and mental symptoms so it is vital to seek help



BY DR WAEL MY MOHAMED

manifest as shock, melancholy, tearfulness, depression, rage, or restlessness and difficulties concentrating, as well as alterations in one’s ideas and perceptions of the world. When you are mourning, you may find it more difficult to accomplish the routine daily chores that you are accustomed to.

Contemplations of the loss may occur frequently and suddenly, eliciting strong emotions. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, physical symptoms of sorrow include headaches, weight fluctuations, and gastrointestinal problems.

Additionally, physical symptoms such as fatigue, chest aches, and muscular tightness may occur. The mourning process, according to experts, is divided into five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, sadness, and eventually, acceptance.

Within this concept, individuals go through stages, although not necessarily in a sequential way. While this approach is beneficial, bear in mind that there is no “right” way to grieve. Some people will grieve quietly, while others may get overwhelmed by sadness and become temporarily unable to function. The event has the potential to transform you, altering your perception of what is truly essential in life.

People sometimes refer to sadness as “broken-hearted” and it turns out that grief does really have a cardiac effect. Hormones and neurochemicals produced during the stress reaction following loss induce an increase in heart rate and blood pressure. The stress associated with the death of a family member might potentially result in a disease known as “broken-heart syndrome”.

According to the American Heart Association, this occurs when a portion of your heart momentarily expands and becomes less efficient at pumping, while the remainder of your heart operates normally or with even more powerful contractions.

Grief, too, has an effect on the brain. Immediately following a loss, the areas of the brain responsible for processing powerful emotions and memories slow down. This may explain why many mourning individuals report feeling disoriented, confused, and somewhat zombie-like, particularly early on.

For the majority of us, such bodily changes lessen over time as the intensity of our grieving diminishes, resulting in “integrated mourning”.

We do not want to believe that mourning will remain profound for the remainder of our life. Generally, it does not. It fades

into the background as it quietens, softens, and fades away. It is what is referred to as “Post-Grief.”

The phrase used to describe the time period that “begins when the most acute reactions to a loss begins to fade”. It predominately encompasses the remainder of our life.

How long does grief last?

There is no fixed timetable for grieving. Some people take a long time to recuperate, while others heal very quickly.

Sometimes, grief can be postponed. Not everyone instantly experiences grief. Many individuals experience sorrow in waves, they feel it and are unable to deal with it in the present, so it recedes into the recesses of their minds.

Months will pass, long after the shock and denial of the loss have passed and they will begin to feel sadness. Grief that is more severe and profound might endure months or even years.

There is no definitive end date for feeling grief in any manner. That is, if a loved one who is a significant part of your life dies, you will grieve them in some way for the remainder of your life. However, the mourning process will generally grow less severe.

While intense sorrow passes, an individual may continue to struggle to move on and handle work, life and daily activities. The following techniques can facilitate the process:

Seek assistance

Counselling for grief will assist you in processing your ideas and feelings. Additionally, you can seek assistance from support groups, mental health experts, religious institutions or spiritual practises.

Make contact with others

Human beings do not grieve properly when left to their own devices. Those who are grieving should seek out someone with whom to share their feelings and process their loss.

Take part in bereavement rituals and sensitise yourself

While your feelings may be strong, do not deny them or avoid thinking about your loved one or what you have lost. Recognising these emotions will assist you in processing the loss.

How to assist a bereaved loved one

The most important thing you can do is listen and provide sympathy. Communicate with the mourning individual through text, invite them on walks and ensure they have a support structure in place. Additionally, you may initiate discussion.

Offering inquiries about the dead and fostering thought and recollections are helpful. Additionally, do not be afraid to provide practical assistance, such as dropping off food, assisting with child or pet care or making important phone calls.

These simple actions may make a world of difference when someone is too angry to cook or is juggling daily obligations. Consider the individual who is mourning and adjust your reaction accordingly. —*The Health*

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