**What is grief? (all information from www.kidshelpphone.ca)**

Grief can mean a lot of different things. You might have heard people talk about a “process” and the different emotions people experience when they’re grieving. Basically, grief is something that people experience after they’ve suffered a loss. The loss can be a death, or a big change that separates you from a person or thing. Grief is how people respond to loss emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.

**Different kinds of loss**

Death is one of the ways that you can lose someone, but you can also lose someone to a breakup, a move, a divorce, a broken friendship, or some other change. Other kinds of loss involve changes that happen inside of you. For example, the loss of your spirituality, beliefs that you once held, or dreams that didn’t come true, can make you grieve. A sudden illness or disability can also cause you to grieve.

**How does it feel?**

Grief can feel pretty heavy, but it’s important to remember that it is a healthy response to something that has happened to you. It might also help you to know that grief lets up over time. Here are some of the common feelings of grief:shock, confusion, fear, anger, sadness, loneliness, emptiness, exhaustion, guilt

But that’s far from a complete list. A person who is grieving might experience one feeling more than the others, or come back to the same feelings over and over. Some people who are grieving have a hard time describing what they feel. One of the most common feelings that people experience when they’re grieving is isolation—the feeling that no one understands what they’re going through, and that they have no one to talk to.

**How does it look?**

Grief looks different for everyone. The feelings that come with a big change or loss can make you distracted and forgetful. Grief can also make you think about death a lot, or make you worry that the people in your life are going to get sick and die. If you have a friend who is grieving, you might wonder if they’re going to act like themselves again. The truth is that grief changes people. That doesn’t mean that you’ll never have your friend back. It just means that they need to time to adjust to this huge hole in their life.

**How long does it last?**

Grief isn’t something that you can time. Some losses might take longer to grieve than others. Grief is something that changes. The feelings shift and evolve. You learn how to deal with the loss in different ways, but it might never go away.

**Different kinds of loss**

Some losses have nothing to do with death, but they can still be really challenging to deal with. In some cases, it might be hard to explain what happened and why you’re so upset. But no matter how it happened, it can hurt a lot when you experience a big change.

**Different kinds of loss**

No one died, but that doesn’t mean that you don’t have good reasons for grieving. Some of the ways that you can lose someone are:

• Breaking up • Moving far away • Divorce of family members • Fighting with friends and not being able to make up • Losing your spirituality, important ideas, or dreams that really mattered to you

• Life-changing or life-threatening illness • Developing a disability

**Feeling bad**

It’s normal to experience a lot of different feelings when you’re grieving. Here are some of them:

• Sadness • Anger • Emptiness • Loneliness • Shock and disbelief • Confusion • Fear

• Relief

Depending on your situation, the last feeling might be hard to identify with. Relief can be common, for example, when parents get divorced, especially if there was a lot of fighting at home. You might feel really sad about your parents splitting up, but part of you might feel relieved knowing that you won’t have to listen to them argue anymore.

**Will I ever feel better?**

You might feel horrible today, but over time, you will learn how to deal with it. In the meantime, it’s important to look after yourself. Here are some things you can do to take care:

• Get enough sleep • Play sports or do another activity you love • Eat properly: don’t skip meals, and try not to eat too much junk food. • Write in a journal, or post something in Express Yourself or Ask Us Online • Take long walks • Hang out with friends who support you

Try not to expect too much of yourself. It’s hard to deal with loss, but pausing long enough to take it in will help you get through it. Accept that things are going to be rough for a while. Eventually, you’ll feel better—it might not be today, but soon.

When you’re suffering, you might feel like doing anything you can to feel better, even if it’s just for a few minutes. This can leave you really vulnerable to unhealthy ways of coping, such as using drugs and alcohol or overeating. Don’t go down that road. It won’t make your problems go away. In fact, it might just make them even worse. Try to take care of yourself.