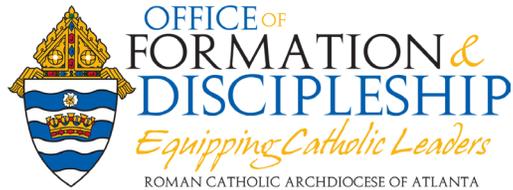


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*You give yourself permission to grieve by recognizing the need for grieving. Grieving is the natural way of working through the loss of a loved one. Grieving is not weakness nor absence of faith. Grieving is as natural as crying when you are hurt, sleeping when you are tired or sneezing when your nose itches. It is nature's way of healing a broken heart.*

- Doug Manning

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If you or a loved one is grieving, please contact the parish office to see what resources are available to you.

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Adapted from materials of the National Catholic Bereavement Ministry

# The Grieving Process

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CATHOLIC GRIEF SUPPORT SERIES

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# The Grieving Process

**Everyone's grief journey is different.**

I can't imagine all the thoughts and feelings you are having right now, but I can tell you a bit about the experience of grieving. Grieving is, first of all, a process. It takes time; it cannot be rushed. Each of us handles loss in our own way, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While each experience of mourning is unique, there are, nevertheless, some similarities in the process. One of those similarities is that there seem to be certain phases that we all go through as we grieve.

Right now you may be feeling numb, confused, and disorganized. You may feel that things are not real, that this is a dream, or that your loved one will return. These experiences characterize the first stage of grief. This part of grieving doesn't usually last very long, but it helps you get through what you have to get through.

The second phase is where you end up doing most of your work. Work? Yes, mourning is work; you may not be doing any heavy labor, but grieving requires a lot of mental labor and readjustment. The trauma of a major loss can also be thought of as a kind of wound. If you use these two analogies, you can see that you'll probably need extra sleep (even afternoon naps), good nutrition (to help you heal), and exercise (even a short walk around the block or moving your hands and legs). Your emotions may run the gamut from deep sadness, to anger, to irritability, to anxiousness, to depression. (You should not assume that what you are experiencing at this point is clinical depression- feeling bad is simply one of the aspects of grieving.)



**Key points to remember:**

- Everyone will experience grief differently.
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve.
- Grieving is work.
- You will experience many emotions.
- There are primary and secondary losses.
- Proper sleep and nutrition are important.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Allow yourself the time to grieve the loss.
- Allow yourself the same grace and love our Lord Jesus gives to you.

*What we have once enjoyed deeply we can never lose. All that we love deeply becomes a part of us.*

*- Helen Keller*

You may feel that you are losing control or going crazy. Don't worry. There is no one way to mourn, and these are all normal reactions to grieving.

Another aspect of this stage of grief is the experience of "secondary losses." You will find yourself mourning not only your primary loss, but all the other little losses connected to it. When one woman's only son was murdered, for example, she not only mourned her son but the fact that there would be no one to look after her in her old age. These losses are painful, but they are also a part of the process of mourning.

Sometimes people have experiences of seeing or feeling the person who died. They remind us of our belief that there is life after death and that both the living and the dead are part of the "communion of saints" in which all believers share.

The final phase of mourning is called the "re-establishment phase." This describes the point in your mourning where you feel you are ready to reenter the world. If you have lost a spouse, you may feel like dating again. Or you may find that you are motivated to do volunteer work for a worthwhile cause. Your energy won't be so tied up with your emotions, and you'll be ready to give to others. It may help you to know that this phase will come; you will feel better eventually.

Remember, everyone is different and everyone goes through the process of mourning in various degrees and lengths. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. Allow yourself the same grace and love our Lord Jesus gives to you.