

# HOW LONG WILL THE PERSON I LOVE GRIEVE?

Information about integration, healing and the ongoing nature of love.

Every human being will grieve when someone they love dies.

Though the certainty that we will grieve is shared, there is a unique cadence to every person's grief. A one-size fits all grief process would be easier to understand, but the reality is that grieving is often messy. Some grieving people cry, a lot; some won't cry at all. Some grieverers will want to talk about their loved one often while others will avoid conversations about the person who has died.

One thing we know for sure is that when a person dies, our love for them lives on in ways large and small. Learning to integrate the love we have for our people who have died, the lessons they have taught us, the memories made with them that have shaped the people we are today is the real work of grief. The better able we are to integrate our past, present and future, the healthier and more resilient we will be.



Integrating our past, present and future is one of the research-proven key elements of building resilience. Most people are encouraged to leave the pain of past experiences "in the past". Often, grieverers are advised to 'get over' their grief and focus on their future rather than their past. Forgetting the past is not only impossible, but also detrimental to healthy healing.



When a loved one dies, the early days of grief are intense and often include overwhelming emotions.

As time passes, the frequency of intense emotion decreases, while the reality of a huge variety of secondary losses begins to unfold.

These secondary losses (some common ones are noted in the side column) may cause a return of intense emotion and earlier grief related physical and emotional symptoms.

Another common side effect of partner loss can be a fear of intimacy or positive emotion. Many grievers struggle with anxiety around the future death of other people they love.

While there are many difficult emotional challenges widowed people face, with resources and support, most also experience post-traumatic growth, increased resilience and a unique, life-affirming perspective from which they benefit as they rebuild their lives post-loss.

## Common Secondary Losses Associated with Widowhood

- the purchase/change/loss of a home
- financial security
- bucket-list trips
- family celebrations
- achievement of long term personal goals
- retirement
- birth of a new family member
- death of family members
- health issues
- innocence regarding life challenges
- struggles/challenges when supporting family members
- shifting of roles and responsibilities
- sense of control over their life/what happens to them
- focus, drive and/or desire to make long-term plans
- faith or certainty around spiritual beliefs