



# Is This *Normal*?

## *How Grief Affects Us*

You look out your window and see cars driving by and people walking past—life seems to be moving on—but yours has been changed forever. Some days it feels impossible to get out of bed. And simple chores like brushing your teeth or doing the dishes are like mountains to be climbed, and you just don't have the energy or focus.

This week's video and participant guide exercises will help you see what's normal in grief and why it affects so many aspects of your life. You'll discover that:

- ◆ **Grief is the natural response to significant loss.**
- ◆ **Grief is difficult because it affects all aspects of your life.**
- ◆ **Processing your grief takes time, but you will be okay.**



## Video outline

Use this outline to write down important concepts, encouraging words, or questions you may have while viewing the video.

### **The impact of grief**

Emotionally

Mentally

Physically

Socially

### **Correcting false notions**

Grieving is "unspiritual."

There's only one right way to grieve.

I will always feel this bad.

## **6 signs of healing**

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Accepting the reality of your loss

Dealing with the emotions of grief

Adjusting to a world without your loved one

Addressing questions about ultimate concerns

Continuing life without forgetting your loved one

Sharing the comfort you've received

## **The value of GriefShare**

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Its 3 components reinforce one another

Come for at least 3 sessions

# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement



## Jonathan's story

"The mental fog for me was real and present and honestly debilitating, because for me, a driven leader who prided himself on productivity, I was disappointed with myself for not being able to process faster. Wynter [my wife] died just before the school year started. And I went to a back-to-school event with 700 people. I remember being there in total shock and just not being able to process what was happening."

*You can likely relate to Jonathan's experience, and yet your grief journey is unique. While grief affects every area of your life, you may struggle in some areas more than others. This week, you'll learn about how processing your grief takes time. Like any journey, the process will have ups and downs, but you will make it through.*

## 1 Grief affects everything

Is there any area of your life that grief hasn't touched? Grief affects you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. So what's "normal" in grief, and how can you cope?

First, recognize the many ways grief is affecting you. Then, take your grieving process day by day, at your own pace.

### God's message to you

"Be merciful to me, LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish ... my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak." (Psalm 31:9-10)

1. How has grief affected you physically and emotionally?

2. **How has it affected other areas of your life (e.g., job, relationships, spiritual life)?**
3. **Who does King David cry out to for help (see Psalm 31)? Who have you cried out to?**

## Remember

- You can ask God for the strength to tend to all your needs—emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical.
- It's important to monitor your health during grief. Make an appointment to see your doctor, if you haven't recently.

## 2 Unraveling your tangled emotions

In order to sort through the mess of emotions, you must first identify, or recognize, which emotions you're experiencing.

1. **Turn to the "Common Responses to the Death of a Loved One" exercise on page 10.**
2. **Place a check next to some of the responses you've experienced.**

This list will help you see what's normal in grief, and it will help you more accurately express what you're feeling (in group discussion, when talking with others, when using the workbook, and while journaling).

Remember, you can tell God all about your emotions and struggles. He wants to hear from you and will help you.

# Healing through *Writing*

## How journaling helps you

Journaling helps calm your inner storm. It takes the thoughts and feelings out of your head and puts them on paper, allowing you to sort through them in a tangible way. It helps you think more clearly and problem-solve. Simply jot down what you're thinking or feeling in a notebook (either paper or electronic).

As you write, you could even include prayers to God. Over time, your journal becomes a record of your journey, and reviewing it allows you to track your progress and growth.

Each week we will suggest some prompts for journaling related to the session topics. If you aren't dealing with those specific issues, write about what you are dealing with.

Here are this session's writing prompts:

**Describe what you miss most about your loved one.**

**Suppose you were going to write a letter to a friend, to prepare him or her for grieving. What would you tell your friend to expect? What cautions might you include?**

# My Healing

## Jonathan's story

"The mental fog for me began to dissipate over time to where now I can think clearly. After losing Wynter, I thought at one point, *Will there ever be a day where I'm going to wake up and my first thought won't be about my loss?* And I was shocked, but at some point I [started] waking up and my first, second, third, fourth, and fifth thoughts weren't about my loss. Every once in a while I wake up and I think about my loss first, but most of the time I'm not thinking about my loss for large portions of the day."

### Next session

Find comfort and develop coping strategies.

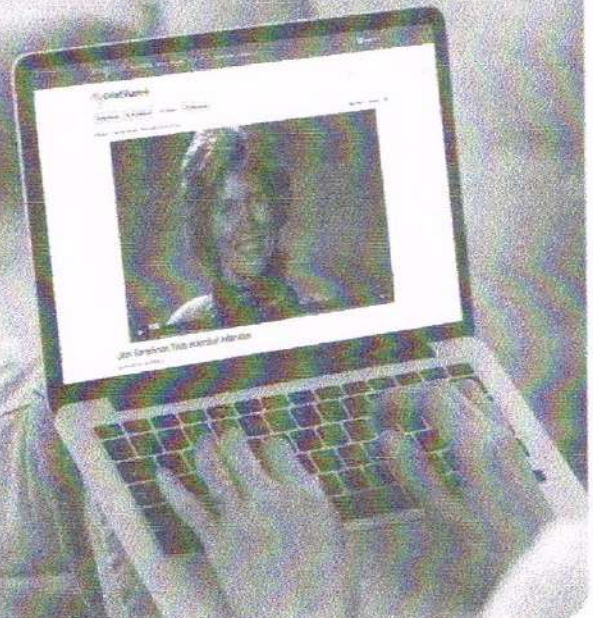
## How to watch session videos online

Log on to [griefshare.org/my](https://griefshare.org/my) to watch full GriefShare session videos. It's a great option if you:

- Missed a meeting and want to see the video
- Want to rewatch something you saw
- Want to review before your group meeting

**Watch the videos today!**

[GRIEFSHARE.ORG/MY](https://griefshare.org/my)



## Common Responses to the Death of a Loved One

Having an idea of what is normal in grief can be helpful. The responses listed here are from people who shared what *they* experienced. Look at this list and see which responses you can relate to.

You'll probably experience several of these at the same time. Grief is not orderly; it's more like a tangled ball of responses. And some of them are polar opposites! This list, while long, is not exhaustive. After looking it over, if you're not sure if your experience is normal, talk with your GriefShare leader, a pastor, doctor, or counselor. They can help you with your concerns.

*Please understand that thinking you "don't want to go on" is normal, but thinking about suicide—especially making plans to take your life—is not normal. Seek help immediately (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call 988).*

### Which responses have you experienced?

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Abandoned                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Compassion                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Distracted                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afraid of facing emotions                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Complaining                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Diving into work                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ambushed by grief                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Concerned about your family members | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't want to go on                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger with others, self, loved one, and/or God | <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Drained                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anguish  | <input type="checkbox"/> Consumed by grief                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing closer to God                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Annoyance                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Crisis of beliefs                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dread                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety  | <input type="checkbox"/> Crying                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional wreck                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Apathy   | <input type="checkbox"/> Dazed                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Empty                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding church                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Denial                              | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouraged                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding grief                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Depending on God                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Envious                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding thinking about the death              | <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Everything is in slow motion              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being harsh with others                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Desire for justice                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Everything is too hard                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Betrayed                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Despairing                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Exhausted/weak                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Devastated                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigued                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blame  | <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointment                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of future                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can't pray                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Disbelief                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like God isn't there              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Can't talk about loved one                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Discontented                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like must                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changed priorities                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Discouraged                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you're doing something wrong |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comparing your grief to other people's         | <input type="checkbox"/> Disorganized                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you're losing your mind      |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Disoriented                         |  |



- Feeling like your faith isn't working
- Feeling like your grief is marginalized
- Feeling you're being a burden
- Financial worries
- Flashbacks
- Forgetful
- Frustrated
- Full of questions
- Going through the motions
- Guilt
- Hallucinations
- Happy your loved one is no longer suffering
- Heartbroken
- Heightened emotions
- Helping everyone but yourself
- Helpless
- Hiding grief
- Hope
- Hopeless
- Hurt
- Impatient
- In a dark tunnel
- Inability to do things as well as you used to
- Inability to function
- Inadequate
- Increased appetite
- Insomnia
- Internalizing grief
- Intrusive thoughts
- Irritable
- Isolating self
- Jealous
- Judged
- Lack of concentration
- Lack of focus
- Lonely
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of identity
- Loss of purpose
- Making silly mistakes
- Memory loss
- Mental fog
- Missing loved one
- Nervous
- Nightmares
- No interest in doing things
- No sense of time
- Not allowing self to grieve
- Not enjoying what you used to enjoy
- Not trusting God
- Numbing pain
- Out of control
- Overwhelmed
- Panic attacks
- Part of you is gone, ripped away
- Peace
- Physical problems: stomachache, headache, chest and heart hurting, nausea, hurting all over, migraines, shortness of breath
- Prayerful
- Pretending you're okay
- Questioning your sanity
- Questions about heaven
- Rage
- Refusing joy
- Regret
- Rejection by friends
- Relief
- Roller coaster emotions
- Rushed
- Sad
- Second-guessing
- Self-pity
- Shame
- Shock
- Shutting down
- Shutting people out
- Sleeping a lot
- Social and relational struggles
- Something's missing
- Sorrow
- Squashed
- Staying busy
- Staying in bed
- Stressed
- Stuffing down emotions
- Surprise
- Tangled emotions
- Thankful
- Tired
- Trying to take care of everything yourself
- Turning to God
- Unable to make decisions
- Uncomfortable with others
- Unproductive
- Unwilling to accept help
- Vindictive
- Vulnerable
- Wanting to rush through this
- Worry
- Other \_\_\_\_\_