



# Your Grief *Journey*

## *It's Uniquely Yours*

A person cuts you off in traffic and you clench your fists and yell things you don't mean. You try to sleep at night, but snowballing worry keeps your mind from shutting off. Lately you've been riding a roller coaster of emotions, and you just want to get off. *I can't go on like this*, you think. You don't feel like yourself, and you worry you're losing it.

This week you'll learn ways to safely manage and deal with grief-related stresses. Through the video and Step by Step exercises, you'll discover:

- **How your circumstances affect your grief.**
- **There are different grieving styles.**
- **Possible surprises & the back-and-forth nature of the grief journey.**



# Video outline

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

## **Your unique circumstances**

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The closeness of the relationship

The suddenness of the death

Your stage in life

The influence of family & culture

## **Your grief style**

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External grievers (focused on emotions & talking)

Internal grievers (focused on problems to solve)

## Grief ambushes

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## Significant “firsts”

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## Tracking progress

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# Step by Step

Daily comfort & encouragement



## Tom's story

"I thought I was abnormal [in the way I was grieving my dad's death]. I thought everything that I was thinking and feeling was wrong. I felt that way as a Christian. And I for sure felt that way as a guy who's crying. I'd think, *Why am I crying? I shouldn't be crying. I'm supposed to be the tough one. I'm supposed to take care of my wife, not my wife trying to take care of me.* So I just felt completely abnormal, like I needed to be over this. I needed to be the good Christian that just relied on God and plowed through it and just felt better."

*The grief journey is full of bumps and detours that probably make you wonder if what you're experiencing is normal. Rest assured that while your journey is unique to you, your thoughts, feelings, and grieving style are normal parts of the grief process. In this week's exercises, you'll learn practical ways to deal with the difficult emotions you're feeling.*

## 1 Scattered brain? How to stay focused



**W**hen you're grieving, you're trying to navigate overwhelming emotions and adjust to many changes in your life. It's hard to keep daily tasks and responsibilities from swirling in your mind. To organize your thoughts and stay on task, try these four tips:

1. **Write it down:** You can't expect yourself to remember everything, so it helps to get things out of your mind and onto paper or your phone. Writing a to-do list relieves some of the stress, because you no longer have to try to remember everything.
2. **Tackle tasks, not projects:** Sometimes you can get bogged down because you put *projects* on your to-do list instead of tasks. Larger projects should be broken down into more manageable tasks. For instance, instead of "Clean my house," break it down into "Sweep the kitchen on Monday," "Wipe down the bathroom on Tuesday," etc.



3. To keep from prolonging your grief, you need to find relief in ways that take you closer to God. Write down some ways you can move closer to God (ask your GriefShare leader, if you need ideas).

## Remember

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- Turning to unhealthy things for comfort creates more complications in your life and makes it harder to handle grief.
- The best way to find relief is to do things that move you closer to God.

## 3 When people try to rush you

Because most people truly don't understand the depth of your grief, they may make comments that cause you to feel the need to hurry up and get past your grief and pain. Do not let people rush you. They are not the authority on your grief. It's important to grieve, to feel the emotions and work through the changes—at your own pace.

### God's message to you

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"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot ... a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4)

1. Describe when you've felt rushed or pressured by someone to get through your grief.
2. Based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, what does God think you should be doing during this season of your life?
3. Anna's friends have made comments that are causing her to feel pressured to "move on" from her grief. What would you say to Anna? What would you say to her friends?



**Remember**

- Going the length of your journey—with no shortcuts or detours—is crucial to your healing.
- “We don’t get through grieving *at least* until the first anniversary of [the] death. And that’s really fast.” – Dr. Susan Zonnebelt-Smeenge

**4** *A sign of healing, p. ix*

**Dealing with emotions**



**S**he isn’t there to talk to, and I feel all alone.” – David

“I was angry that this had happened.” – Jody

“I was fearful of what was going to happen to my kids and me.” – Marisol

Maybe you can relate to these emotions. Loneliness, anger, and fear are common in grief. But in order to find relief, at some point you’ll need to start recognizing and taking steps to work through these emotions. (Now, if you feel you aren’t ready to work through your emotions, that’s okay. Don’t put unnecessary pressure on yourself!)

As difficult as these emotions are, they do have a purpose. Learning about these purposes will help you figure out how to respond in ways that are most helpful to you.

Painful emotion	Useful purpose
Anger	To energize you to deal with something that’s unfair or unjust
Fear	To protect you from jumping into a dangerous situation
Sadness	To slow you down so you can adjust to changes after a loss

As you start to think about managing these emotions, consider these questions:

1. If you’re angry, what situation or person do you think has been unfair or unjust?
2. If you’re afraid, what danger(s) do you fear?
3. If you’re sad, what are some specific things you’ll miss because of your loss?

Knowing the purposes of your emotions can help you (1) change your perspective on them and (2) start to manage them in a way that moves you toward relief and comfort. We’ll show you more about how to use these powerful emotions for your benefit and the benefit of others later in this guide and in the videos.

# 5

## Healing through *Writing*

### Tracking your emotions

Are you having trouble managing your emotions? Writing them down in a notebook or journal (paper or digital) organizes your thoughts and can bring a sense of order to the chaos in your mind. Use these prompts as a guide.

- Describe how your emotions have changed and fluctuated this week.
- Describe what *helped* you deal with the reality of your loss this week (e.g., talking about your feelings, working on a remembrance project, looking at pictures, gardening, etc.). How was that helpful?



## Chart your progress

Place a check in the boxes to identify how you are feeling this week: emotionally, physically, etc.  
Or, even better, insert a word to describe how you are doing.

	BAD	OKAY	GOOD	GREAT
<b>Emotionally</b>				
<b>Physically</b>				
<b>Spiritually</b>				
<b>Relationally</b>				
<b>How your life is in general</b>				

## My Healing

### Tom's story

"I determined that I couldn't live like this any longer, that I had to do something about it. I needed to talk to somebody who I felt wouldn't judge me and wouldn't think less of me if I showed my grief. The GriefShare group I went to was probably the first and the most important step for me. It was the group setting that allowed me to process through my anger and my depression and my anxiety. GriefShare reminded me that God loved me and was with me in my circumstances, and that He hadn't abandoned me."

#### Next session

Discover how to relieve sadness and loneliness.