

THE
FIRST
90 DAYS

A GENTLE GUIDE THROUGH EARLY GRIEF

WHEN GRIEF FEELS TOO HEAVY TO CARRY

PURE GRIEF PATHWAYS

A Complete Emotional Navigation System for Grief

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The First 90 Days: A Gentle Guide Through Early Grief

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This guide provides general educational and emotional-support information relating to grief and bereavement. It is not medical advice, psychological treatment, counselling, psychotherapy, diagnosis or a substitute for professional healthcare or mental-health support.

Grief experiences vary considerably from person to person. The ideas within this guide are offered as gentle options rather than instructions about how anyone should grieve.

If you are concerned about your physical or emotional wellbeing, please consider speaking with an appropriately qualified healthcare or mental-health professional.

Published by Pure Grief Pathways | puregriefpathways.com

Early Grief Can Make Everything Feel Unfamiliar

The first days, weeks and months after losing someone you love can feel extraordinarily disorientating.

Life around you continues. People go to work. Traffic moves. Shops open. Messages arrive. The world appears to be functioning normally.

And yet your own world may feel completely different.

You may wake for a few seconds before remembering what has happened. You may instinctively reach for your phone to contact them. You may hear something funny and immediately think: I need to tell them.

Then the reality of their absence returns.

These moments can happen repeatedly during early grief. Sometimes the pain is obvious. At other times you may feel numb, disconnected, exhausted or strangely unable to understand what you're feeling at all.

You might find yourself wondering: Why can't I concentrate? Why do simple things feel so difficult? Why does grief suddenly hit me when I thought I was coping? How am I supposed to do this without them?

There is no single correct way to experience these first 90 days.

90 days is not a deadline.

You are not expected to have recovered, adjusted, moved forward or reached any particular emotional destination by Day 90. We are simply focusing on this early period because sometimes looking at the entire future is too much.

For now, we can make the horizon smaller.

Why Early Grief Can Feel So Overwhelming

When someone important dies, their absence can affect countless parts of everyday life.

You may miss their voice, touch, messages, routines, reassurance, humour, opinions, presence in another room - the person you told things to, made decisions with, and the person who understood parts of you without explanation.

You may also be grieving the future you expected to share.

This is one reason early grief can feel so overwhelming. You aren't necessarily experiencing one emotion called grief.

You may experience sadness, longing, anger, fear, confusion, guilt, loneliness, disbelief, exhaustion and even moments of numbness. Sometimes several can appear in the same day.

There may even be moments when you laugh, become distracted or briefly feel almost normal. Then grief returns.

That doesn't mean you're doing anything wrong.

Early grief can move unpredictably. A manageable morning can become a painful afternoon. A memory can comfort you one day and overwhelm you the next.

There is no emotional timetable you are required to follow.

Instead of asking “How do I get over this?” try asking: “How can I make this particular moment a little easier to carry?”

1. Make The Time Horizon Smaller

Early grief can pull the mind far into the future.

How am I going to live without them? How will I cope next month? What will birthdays be like? What about Christmas? What will happen to me now? Will I always feel like this?

These are understandable questions. But trying to emotionally process an entire future while you're already overwhelmed can make the present feel even heavier.

So make the horizon smaller.

Instead of asking “How am I going to get through this year?” try: “What would help me through today?”

If today feels too large: “What would help me through this afternoon?”

If that still feels overwhelming: “What do I need for the next hour?”

And sometimes: “What do I need for the next ten minutes?”

Perhaps it's water. Something small to eat. A shower. Fresh air. A quiet room. Someone you trust. Rest. Or simply permission to sit exactly where you are for a while.

You don't need an answer for the rest of your life.

You don't have to carry tomorrow while you're still carrying today.

2. Return To Where You Are

During early grief, the mind can move constantly between memories of the past and fears about the future.

Sometimes gently reconnecting with what is physically around you can make an overwhelming moment feel slightly smaller.

You don't need to meditate. You don't need to empty your mind. Simply notice where you are.

TRY THIS

5 things you can see

Perhaps a window, a photograph, a cup, a tree, a lamp.

4 things you can physically feel

Your feet against the floor, clothing against your skin, the chair supporting you, the temperature of the air.

3 things you can hear

Traffic outside, birds, a clock, your own breathing.

I am here. I only need to deal with this moment.

This exercise isn't intended to remove grief. You aren't trying to forget the person you love or distract yourself from their importance.

You're simply giving your mind somewhere immediate to return when everything begins to feel too large.

3. Let The Feeling Exist Without Solving It

There can be enormous pressure surrounding grief - to understand it, control it, explain it, cope with it or recover from it.

But some moments aren't problems requiring solutions. They're moments of sadness, longing or love that need somewhere to exist.

When a wave of grief arrives, try removing the demand that you must immediately make it stop.

You might quietly acknowledge:

This is a difficult moment.

I miss them.

I wish they were here.

This hurts because they mattered to me.

You don't need to turn the feeling into a lesson. You don't have to find something positive about it. And you don't need to understand why this particular moment has affected you so deeply.

For a few minutes, allow whatever has arrived to be there: tears, silence, anger, longing, confusion, numbness - even laughter at a memory.

There is nothing you have to perform.

You are allowed to miss someone without having to solve the fact that you miss them.

4. Reduce What You Are Asking Of Yourself

One of the surprising things about early grief is how difficult ordinary responsibilities can become.

Emails. Shopping. Paperwork. Cooking. Appointments. Messages. Housework. Making telephone calls. Remembering things. Making decisions.

Something that once required almost no thought may suddenly feel exhausting.

When everything seems urgent, reduce the number of things you're asking yourself to carry.

TODAY

What genuinely needs my attention today?

LATER

What can safely wait?

SOMEONE ELSE CAN HELP

What could another person do for me?

Then choose one thing from the first list. Not five. One. Do that if you can. Then reassess.

You are allowed to postpone things that don't need to happen today. You are allowed to accept help. You are allowed to say: "I can't deal with that right now."

Early grief already asks a great deal of you.

Doing less for a while doesn't mean you are failing.

5. Create An Anchor For Difficult Moments

Grief can sometimes arrive without warning: a song, a photograph, an empty room, a familiar smell, a particular time of day, someone mentioning their name - or seemingly nothing at all.

It can help to have something simple and familiar that you can return to when this happens. Think of it as your personal anchor.

Not something that removes grief. Something that helps you through the next few minutes.

Your anchor could be a particular chair, a comforting photograph, a familiar walk, a warm drink, a piece of music, holding something that belonged to the person you love, calling someone who understands, writing a few words, standing outside, or simply placing your hand over your heart and allowing everything to slow down.

MY EARLY-GRIEF ANCHOR

When grief suddenly feels overwhelming, I can:

Someone I feel comfortable contacting is:

Something I can allow to wait is:

Something I want to remind myself is:

Keep these answers somewhere easy to find. You don't have to invent a new way of coping every time a difficult moment arrives.

Your Gentle Plan For An Overwhelming Day

You don't need to remember every word in this guide. When early grief feels particularly heavy, come back to these five ideas.

1 - MAKE THE HORIZON SMALLER

Don't carry next month when the next ten minutes are enough.

2 - RETURN TO WHERE YOU ARE

Notice what you can see, feel and hear. Bring your attention gently back to the present moment.

3 - DON'T DEMAND THAT THE FEELING DISAPPEAR

You can acknowledge a painful moment without having to solve it.

4 - REDUCE THE LOAD

Ask yourself: What genuinely needs my attention today? Allow other things to wait.

5 - RETURN TO YOUR ANCHOR

Use the person, place, object or simple routine you've chosen to help you through difficult moments.

A difficult hour doesn't predict tomorrow. A difficult day doesn't mean you're going backwards. Feeling grief deeply doesn't mean you're grieving incorrectly. Feeling okay for an hour doesn't mean you're forgetting them.

Grief isn't a race towards Day 90.

The first 90 days are simply part of a much larger journey. For now, one gentle step is enough.

You Don't Have To Navigate Everything At Once

If you've reached this page, there is one thing I'd particularly like you to take away from this guide.

You don't have to understand your entire grief journey today. You don't have to make peace with everything. You don't have to know what your future will look like.

And you certainly don't have to stop loving or missing the person who died.

Sometimes the gentlest way through early grief is to stop asking yourself to carry the whole journey at once.

**The next breath. The next decision. The next hour. The next gentle step.
That can be enough.**

THE TETHER RELEASE METHOD

This free guide introduces some of the supportive principles behind The Tether Release Method, a Pure Grief Pathways program created specifically around the experience of early grief and the first 90 days after loss.

The complete program goes deeper, providing a structured pathway to help you navigate the moments when grief feels overwhelming without imposing deadlines, expecting you to “move on”, or asking you to leave the love you shared behind.

If you feel that additional support would be helpful, you can explore The Tether Release Method and choose the format that feels most comfortable for you.

EXPLORE THE TETHER RELEASE METHOD

There is no requirement to continue. This free guide is yours to keep and return to whenever you need it.

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