

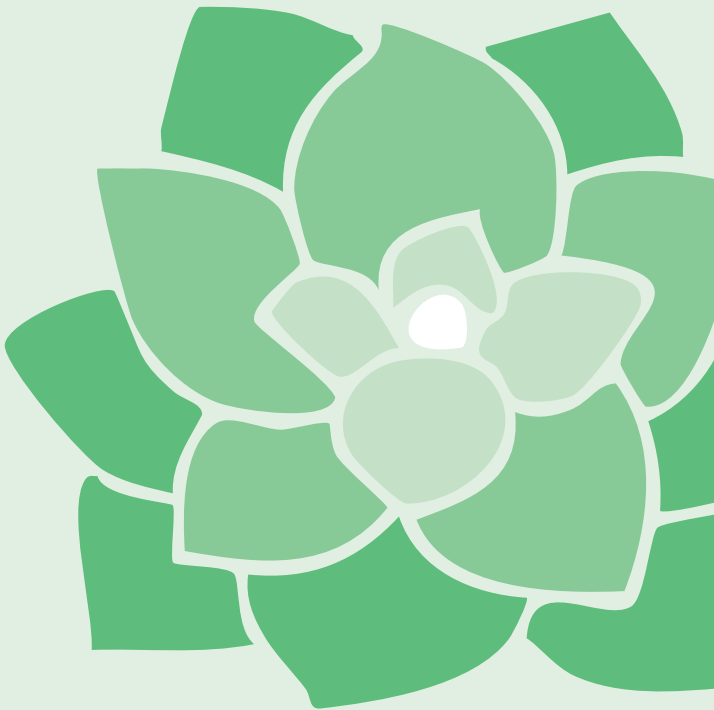
HIGHMARK

CARING PLACE 

finding hope in grief

The emotional
ups and downs

Navigating the spiral of grief



Grieving as a lifelong process

Grief is the process of discovering what it means to live without someone who has been woven into our lives. Over time, feelings of grief come round and round as if in a spiral. This process can bring intense pain. Be kind to yourself. Processing these feelings is an important part of healing.

“In grief nothing ‘stays put.’ One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs. Round and round. Everything repeats. Am I going in circles, or dare I hope I am on a spiral?”

— C.S. Lewis,
from *A Grief Observed*



Grief is a journey.

Grief has no endpoint. It evolves over time, becoming a part of your life’s story. Grief may resurface during milestones where a loved one is especially missed. Life events, special dates, smells, and sounds can bring back strong feelings of early grief, either anticipated or sudden.

Feelings of grief change.

Over time, you’ll gradually reconnect to the world around you. However, it’s not a straight road up and out of grief. You’ll notice that space grows between your feelings of grief. While it may be a part of your life, it no longer defines every breath.

Grieving spirals around.

You might find yourself revisiting emotions and experiences. It’s normal to feel like you’re going back to the beginning at times. Acknowledging the pain of missing your loved one can help you find a path forward.

Grief trigger checklist

Make a list of potential triggers below, so you can better understand the next tough time. Examples could be important dates, physical sensations, and things you did daily together.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Common emotions in grief

Everyone's way of grieving is unique. Feelings change by the hour, year, and decade. Be kind to yourself and allow your feelings to surface.

Shock

Many people find themselves thinking, "I can't believe this is happening to me." It comes with a sense of fog. Nothing seems real. You may watch yourself just going through the motions of your day. Realizing that the road ahead is a new one can be scary and confusing.

Devastation

The life that once was will not return. As a young mother put it, "After someone you love dies, you find your life is like a jigsaw puzzle that's been scattered all over the floor. Over time, you work on putting it back together. And you find that some pieces are missing and gone forever."

Fear

How do you face a world that is now unrecognizable? Feelings of powerlessness can intensify the fear. Children are often afraid that another loved one will die next.

Loneliness

You might feel as if you have less in common with others, less able to be understood. People may seem uncomfortable and not know what to say. Inside families, children may not want to upset the adults, and so stop mentioning certain things.

Strength

The idea of 'staying strong' is often misunderstood. True strength means allowing yourself to experience your emotions, even when it's hard. It also means asking for help, prioritizing self-care, and taking life one step at a time.



Hope in grief

It may be hard to imagine but hope and grief can coexist. Hope in grief isn't about forgetting your loss or pretending that everything's okay. It's about finding a path forward. And believing, despite pain, there's still the possibility of joy, connection, and meaning.

Hope might look different now. It might be hope for a peaceful moment, a good memory to surface, or strength to get through another day. You might hope that the intensity of your grief will lessen over time.

Allow yourself to embrace hope in small ways. It's a light that can guide you through darkness, reminding you healing is possible.

We all need support, children and adults alike. While our culture emphasizes independence, finding community in mourning is an ancient and essential part of grieving. Sharing with understanding people will bring comfort, validation, and belonging.

Helping grieving children and families heal over a lifetime

Our mission is to create a world of compassionate communities where all people can find hope and healing after the death of a loved one. We provide grief support for families and individuals of all ages through peer groups, education, and advocacy.

Where to find us

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