



FREE GUIDE • GRIEF COMPANION

Grief is not a straight line. *A companion for the days after.*

A gentle companion for grief, from our team at Graceway Wellness. What loss can feel like, small daily anchors, and room for grief that doesn't follow a timeline.

PREPARED BY

© 2026 Graceway Wellness · Burlington, Ontario

FIND US AT

gracewaywellness.com

01

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

Grief is not *a straight line*.

Someone, or something, you loved is gone. And the world is still moving at its usual pace, asking you to keep up.

You may have heard about the stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. They are real experiences, and many people recognize themselves somewhere in that list. But Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who first described them, later wrote that they were never meant to be a straight line. They are descriptions, not prescriptions. There is no order you are supposed to follow, and no stage you can fail.

Most people find that grief moves in waves instead. A heavy morning. Then a stretch where life almost feels ordinary. Then a song in the grocery store undoes you. Many people also notice themselves moving back and forth between feeling the loss and tending to daily life. Both of those are grieving. The kettle and the crying both count.

This guide will not try to hurry you anywhere. Grief is not something to get over. It is something you learn to carry, and you deserve company while you learn.

How to use this guide: there is nothing here to complete. Read the page that meets you today and leave the rest for another day. This guide will keep.

02

IT'S NOT ONLY SADNESS

What grief *can feel like*.

Grief is not only an emotional event. It lives in the body, and the physical side often surprises people who expected pure sadness. If your body has felt strange since the loss, you are not imagining it.

WHERE IT
SHOWS UP

WHAT IT CAN FEEL LIKE

In your body

Fatigue that sleep doesn't seem to touch, appetite changes in either direction, chest tightness, headaches, muscle tension, waking at 3 a.m.

In your thinking

Mental fog, losing words, rereading the same paragraph three times, walking into rooms with no idea why

In your feelings

Waves of sadness, stretches of numbness, anger, guilt, and sometimes a moment of relief or laughter that catches you off guard

None of this means something is wrong with you. Your whole system is absorbing an enormous change, and these responses usually soften as grief is given room. Anger and guilt deserve a special word: they are two of the most common grief responses, and neither one means you loved badly.

A NOTE ON YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

*If physical symptoms persist or get worse, please talk with your family doctor as well.
Grief and the body are connected, and care for one supports the other.*

03

SMALL THINGS, HELD DAILY

Gentle *daily anchors*.

When grief is heavy, big routines fall apart, and they should be allowed to. Anchors are smaller than routines. They are tiny fixed points that give a shapeless day somewhere to rest. Choose one or two. Not all five.

- i. **Keep one steady moment in the morning.** The same chair, the same cup of tea, a few quiet minutes before the day asks anything of you.
- ii. **Let the waves be waves.** When grief rises, you can name it: this is a wave. Waves crest and pass. You don't have to fight it or fix it, just stay with yourself while it moves through.
- iii. **Tend to yourself like someone in your care.** Small meals, water nearby, rest when it's offered. You would do this for a grieving friend. You count too.
- iv. **Touch the outside world once a day.** A short walk, a minute on the porch, daylight on your face. Not to feel better. Just to stay connected.
- v. **Give the remembering a home.** A few minutes with a photo, a candle, a journal, a prayer. When remembering has a time and place of its own, it ambushes the rest of the day a little less.

IF A DAY GOES BY AND NONE OF THIS HAPPENED

That is not failure. Grief takes more energy than almost anything else a person does. Rest counts. Tomorrow, the anchor will still be there.

04

THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU

Grieving *alongside others.*

Grief rarely happens alone. A family can lose the same person and grieve them in completely different ways, on completely different clocks. One of you wants to talk. One goes quiet. One stays busy. None of those is wrong, but the differences can feel like distance just when you need each other most.

People outside the loss often say clumsy things. Move on. Stay strong. At least. They usually mean well. You are still allowed to protect yourself from advice you didn't ask for.

WORDS YOU CAN BORROW

"Today is a heavy day. I don't need advice, just company."

"I'd love to talk about them. Will you say their name with me?"

"I'm not up for that yet. Ask me again in a few weeks."

Some losses get casseroles and sympathy cards. Others go quietly unrecognized: a miscarriage, a divorce, an estrangement, a parent who is still here but no longer remembers you, a funeral that happened an ocean away without you. If your loss is one the world tends to overlook, it is still loss, and it still deserves room.

And if your mourning follows traditions of its own, forty days, a year of observances, rituals that honour the person for a lifetime, those are not something to explain away or squeeze into a bereavement-leave calendar. They are part of how you heal.

05

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR UNBEARABLE

When extra *support helps*.

Most grief gradually softens. The sharp edges round, and the heaviest days come less often. But sometimes grief stays stuck, and sometimes you simply do not want to walk through it alone. You do not have to wait until it feels unbearable to ask for help. It may be time to reach out if:

- ☐ Grief feels stuck or overwhelming after several months
- ☐ Work, parenting, or relationships are suffering
- ☐ You're using alcohol or substances to get through
- ☐ You feel cut off from everyone around you
- ☐ Anniversaries, holidays, or reminders keep levelling you
- ☐ You simply don't want to go through this alone

Grief therapy is not about fixing grief or making it go away. It is a dedicated space where your loss is taken seriously, where you don't have to perform being okay, and where you can begin to make sense of what has changed. In a first session, your therapist mostly listens. You set the pace. And if the weight ever tips into not feeling safe, please reach for help right away. You can call or text 9-8-8 at any hour.

A GENTLE WORD BEFORE YOU GO

However your grief looks, however long it has been, it makes sense. You loved, and love this size leaves a mark. The aim was never to stop missing them. It is to carry them in a way that lets you live. You don't have to find that way alone.

Notes & *a small plan.*

Before you close this guide, take a moment. Jot down what stood out, then choose one small thing to try. A plan you can actually keep beats a perfect one you can't.

What I want to remember

My small plan

One small step I'll try first

When I'll start

What might get in the way

Someone or something that could help

A GENTLE REMINDER

You don't have to act on all of this. Pick one thing, give it a real week, and let that be enough to start.

YOUR NEXT STEP

You don't have to carry *this alone.*

When you're ready, grief counselling can give your loss the room it deserves, at your pace, with no pressure to be anywhere other than where you are. The next step is a free 15-minute consultation. Answer a few questions, get matched with the therapist who fits your situation, and pick a time that works. No obligation, no pressure, and nothing to pay.

Get matched & book your free consultation

gracewaywellness.com/book/free-consultation · about 90 seconds

Meet our therapists first

gracewaywellness.com/our-team

Prefer to reach out directly?

hello@gracewaywellness.com · (289) 204-4439

In-person in Burlington · Virtual across Ontario