

Grief and Loss in Recovery

Use this guide to choose support and prepare a next step after a loss. You do not have to tell the whole story to ask for help.

Grief can affect feelings and daily life [2] [3]

Grief can follow a death, a relationship ending, losing a job or another significant loss. It may bring sadness, anger, numbness or confusion, and changes in sleep, appetite or energy. Grief has no fixed sequence of stages or timetable everyone must meet. These descriptions can help you name what has changed. They are not a diagnosis or a checklist you need to match. [2] [3]

Original words you can borrow

What I need	A possible opening
Company without advice	I do not need you to fix this. Could you sit with me or call this evening?
Help with one responsibility	I am struggling to handle the errands this week. Could you help with groceries on Wednesday?
Room to remember someone	Would you be willing to listen to a memory? It is okay to tell me if this is not a good time.
A conversation with my clinician	Since this loss, these parts of my days have changed. I would like to discuss what support I need.

Choose the kind of support you need [1] [2] [3] [4]

- For company or practical help, ask someone you trust for something specific. If they cannot help, try another chosen person or a professional. SAMHSA recommends this approach to asking for support.
- For grief support, consider a grief counselor, grief-support group, or community or faith connection that fits you. Ask who it serves, whether support is online or in person, the cost, availability and how to join.
- Not everyone needs counseling for grief. If everyday life is becoming difficult, talk with your doctor or a licensed counselor with grief experience. Describe changes in sleep, meals, concentration or responsibilities without needing to diagnose yourself.
- In the U.S., call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org for support if you are struggling or in crisis. Call 911 for immediate physical danger or a medical emergency.

Keep notes private. Write or type short notes. Use another copy if you need more room. Save and reopen the PDF to check your answers.

A small support plan

What I want someone to understand

Write only what feels useful. You can describe the effect on your days without details of the loss.

One request and who I will ask

Request, person, when/how to ask, and a backup contact.

What I want to discuss with a professional, if relevant

Changes in sleep, daily functioning, substance-use concerns or ongoing care; questions, not a self-diagnosis.

Keep grief support and recovery care connected

Original opening for your care team: "Since this loss, I have noticed _____. Can we discuss my substance use, cravings, attendance or care?" Keep their contact on My Recovery Support Map. These educational prompts are not treatment or a grief assessment.

Read more or take the next step

[SAMHSA: How to Ask for Help](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help)

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help>

[988: What to expect when you reach out](https://988lifeline.org/get-help/what-to-expect/)

<https://988lifeline.org/get-help/what-to-expect/>

Sources

[1] [SAMHSA: How to Ask for Help](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help) (samhsa.gov)

[2] [CDC: Grief](https://www.cdc.gov/grief/) (cdc.gov)

[3] [NIH News in Health: Navigating Grief \(July 2026\)](https://www.nih.gov/news-events/nih-research-magazine/july-2026/navigating-grief) (newsinhealth.nih.gov)

[4] [SAMHSA: Crisis Help](https://www.samhsa.gov/crisis-help) (samhsa.gov)