

Grief is a word that can be used in many different contexts. One of these could be "come to grief" which means to have an unfortunate or unsuccessful end or outcome; or the informal meaning is to trouble or annoy; Â e.g. people were giving me grief for leaving ten minutes early.

"Grief" as a noun means deep or intense sorrow, often associated with loss. Many of us will and have already experienced grief in our lives; some will experience it multiple times. It is a fundamental part of our lives that is often misunderstood, overlooked and "swept under the carpet".

So, have you lost something important to you?, Â and has this made you feel ... sad, angry, frustrated, down, wanted to cry, lost your appetite, can't sleep, can't focus on things because you keep thinking about it?

These are all feelings which describe "grief" - it is often related to the loss of a loved one either through separation, death or divorce. It can also be experienced when one moves countries leaving family and friends behind, or being made redundant, changing jobs or having other major life changing events.

In the case of losing a loved one through death, people often find that they are unsure of how to approach someone when they are in the early stages of their grief. There are five stages of Â the grief process:

Denial > Anger > Bargaining > Depression > Acceptance

It is important to Â realise that "grief" is a normal reaction to a significant loss. One does not necessarily pass through the stages in that order nor on a defined schedule. There can be moving forward and backward. The process is a gradual one, with one gain at a time.

Grief can be socially debilitating, it can also affect your ability to complete day to day tasks, and also make it difficult to maintain focus on your job.

What people suffering from grief need are people:

- Who will listen to all parts of the grieving person's awareness.
- Who do not judge / tell them it will be OkayÂ or to "get over it".
- Who can empathise (you cannot listen to another person when you are trying to express your own opinions.)
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- Beginning Experience provides a programme to help people who are stuck in the grief process and need a safe environment to deal with and to come to a place where they are able to move on and begin a new life.

Beginning Experience is a peer, grief resolution, programme for separated, divorced and widowed persons of these losses. The Beginning Experience Weekend programme runs in Auckland from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon and is conducted in a safe and caring environment.