

Grief and  
bereavement

# Ambiguous loss



- What is grief?
- What is disenfranchised grief?
- How does it affect us?
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# What are **grief and bereavement?**

## **Bereavement is..**

Bereavement is the period of time when we have lost someone or something important to us

## **Grief is..**

Grief is a response to bereavement. Everyone experiences grief differently, though it is commonly associated with feelings of sadness, despair, anger, or denial

Grief can also affect us physically; for example, we may find a change in our eating habits or sleeping patterns. These reactions are common and normal

## **Types of grief..**

There are many different types of grief

Some of the more commonly recognised forms of grief include **anticipatory grief**, disenfranchised grief or ambiguous grief

But there are other types as well, such as parasocial grief, or special interest grief

# What is **ambiguous loss?**

## **Ambiguous**

**loss** happens when we experience grief without clear closure or certainty. This might include grief for a person who hasn't died, but whose absence or change leaves us grieving.

Ambiguous loss may occur when a loved one has an advanced dementia, and may no longer seem to be the person they once were. It can also be grieving someone who is still alive, but physically or emotionally absent (for example a loved one who is missing or has left without explanation)

This form of grief isn't always recognized or acknowledged, so can feel especially difficult or isolating.

# How can it affect us?



Ambiguous loss can affect us in many of the same ways as other forms of grief. We may also feel angry, stressed, or confused, especially where there is uncertainty (for example if a loved one is missing).

People have also reported feelings of disappointment or guilt for grieving a person who is still alive.

## Some examples of **ambiguous loss**

If a loved one is struggling with an addiction, it can lead to an ambiguous loss. They may still be present, and we may still see them every day. But we may feel that the person they used to be has changed.

When loved ones go missing, it can also lead to an ambiguous loss. Uncertainty about how they are, where they are, or what has happened can lead to us feeling grief.

Grief is our natural response to loss. This means that we may grieve someone or something, even if they haven't died, or we don't know if they have died.

# More information

## **Mind**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/bereavement/about-bereavement/>

## **Marie Curie**

<https://www.mariecurie.org.uk/information/grief/stages-of-grief>

## **Cruse**

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/understanding-grief/>

## **Sue Ryder**

<https://www.sueryder.org/grief-support/about-bereavement-and-grief/stages-of-grief/>

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