



OAK RIDGES HOSPICE  
OF DURHAM LTD.

## OAK RIDGES HOSPICE GRIEF AND BEREAVEMENT SERVICES



“Grief is as unique as the individual who experiences it.  
There is no ‘right’ way to grieve, only your way.”  
– Dr. Alan Wolfelt

# What is Grief?

Grief is a natural, emotional response to the loss of someone or something significant. It's a universal experience, but each person experiences grief in their own way, influenced by their relationship with the person who has passed, the circumstances surrounding the loss, and their own emotional resilience.

Grief is more than just sadness; it can encompass a wide range of emotions and physical responses. While it's often seen as a process, grief doesn't follow a set timeline or linear path. The process can last months or even years, and people may revisit different emotions and experiences along the way. Understanding grief and recognizing the different types and responses can help individuals feel more empowered and less isolated in their journey.

## Physical Responses

Grief can take a toll on the body, leading to various physical symptoms. These may include:

- **Fatigue** – A feeling of exhaustion or low energy, which can make daily tasks feel difficult.
- **Sleep disturbances** – Insomnia or sleeping excessively are common responses to grief.
- **Appetite changes** – Some people may experience a loss of appetite, while others may overeat.
- **Headaches or body aches** – Physical pain, like tension headaches or muscle soreness, can manifest as part of the grieving process.
- **Shortness of breath or chest tightness** – Feelings of anxiety or panic related to grief can cause tightness or difficulty breathing.

## Emotional Responses

Grief often brings a wide range of emotions, including:

- **Sadness** – A deep sense of sorrow over the loss.
- **Anger** – Some people may feel angry, either at the person who passed for leaving them or at others who may have contributed to the loss (e.g., doctors, family members).
- **Guilt** – Feelings of regret or self-blame, especially if there were unresolved issues or if the person feels they could have done more to help the deceased.
- **Loneliness** – A sense of isolation, even when surrounded by others, as the relationship with the deceased was unique and irreplaceable.
- **Relief** – Sometimes, particularly in cases of anticipatory grief, the person may experience a sense of relief when the suffering ends, which can bring feelings of guilt.
- **Fear or Anxiety** – Fear about life without the loved one, or anxiety about facing the future alone.

## Mental Responses

Mentally, grief can cause confusion, difficulty concentrating, or even denial. Common mental responses include:

- **Forgetfulness or mental fog** – Difficulty focusing on tasks or remembering things can happen during intense grief.
- **Denial** – A person might struggle to believe or accept the death has occurred. Denial can serve as a temporary coping mechanism to soften the shock.
- **Intrusive thoughts** – Individuals may repeatedly think about the loved one, their death, or what could have been, making it hard to move forward.
- **Preoccupation with the deceased** – Some may find themselves obsessively thinking about the deceased or going over past events, even replaying conversations or moments in their mind.

## **Grief Program at Oak Ridges Hospice**

Our one-year Grief Support Program is here to provide the guidance, comfort, and resources you need to navigate this challenging time. Whether you're seeking one-on-one support or connecting with others who understand your experience, our compassionate team is here to help you process your emotions, cope with the pain of loss, and ultimately find healing at your own pace. Explore our program options below to find the support that feels right for you.

### **Individual Peer Support**

Our Individual Peer Support program offers a compassionate, one-on-one experience designed to help you through your grief journey. Over the course of 12 sessions, you'll connect with a trained grief and bereavement volunteer, someone who has personally experienced the loss of a loved one. While not a professional counselor, your volunteer will provide empathetic support, share their own experiences, and offer comfort during this difficult time. These sessions, conducted over the phone, provide a confidential and supportive space for you to express your feelings, reflect on your grief, and receive practical coping strategies. This program is an opportunity to connect with someone who truly understands your pain, helping you feel heard and supported as you navigate your path to healing.

### **Group Support**

Throughout the year, we offer a variety of specialized groups to cater to different types of loss, including spousal loss, parental loss, and mixed loss groups. Each group is tailored to the unique needs of those grieving specific relationships, ensuring that participants can relate to and find comfort in others who are going through similar experiences. Guided by a trained facilitator, each session fosters healing, understanding, and connection, with respect for each person's individual journey. Whether you're looking for shared experiences or simply a place to be heard, our grief group offers a sense of community and comfort during this challenging time.

## Memorial Events

Our memorial events offer a special opportunity for family members to gather and honor the memory of their loved ones. Hosted periodically throughout the year, these events feature elements of a lighting ceremony to symbolize remembrance and reflection. Participants are invited to honor of those they've lost, creating a collective moment of tribute and connection. These gatherings provide a supportive and compassionate space for families to come together, find comfort, reconnect with the care team, and memorialize their loved ones in a meaningful way. Through these events, we create a sense of community and shared healing, allowing individuals to reflect on the lives of those they hold dear.

## Monthly Webinars

Our virtual monthly webinars offer a convenient and accessible way to receive grief support from the comfort of your own home. These webinars provide valuable insights, coping strategies, and expert guidance on navigating the grieving process. Each session is led by experienced professionals and covers a range of topics relevant to those coping with loss. Whether you're seeking practical advice, emotional support, or just a sense of community, our webinars are designed to help you feel supported and empowered. Join us each month to learn, connect, and find comfort as you navigate your grief journey.

## Gathering Plate

The Gathering Plate is a warm and welcoming space where you can connect with others, share stories, build friendships, and find support over a meal. It's an opportunity to come together, enjoy good company, and create lasting connections in a comfortable and supportive environment. Please note that lunch will not be provided, so we kindly ask guests to cover the cost of their own meal. We look forward to seeing you there!

If at any point you feel you need additional support beyond what our programs offer, we are here to help connect you with the right resources. We can refer you to professional counselors, grief specialists, or other community-based grief support services that can provide further assistance tailored to your needs. Our goal is to ensure that you have access to the support that will best help you navigate your grief journey, whether through our program or trusted professionals in the community.

For more information, please contact the Supportive Care Counsellor at Oak Ridges Hospice at 289-225-0217

## **Other Community Supports:**

### **Canadian Virtual Hospice**

[www.mygrief.ca](http://www.mygrief.ca)  
[www.youthgrief.ca](http://www.youthgrief.ca)  
[www.kidsgrief.ca](http://www.kidsgrief.ca)

### **VON Durham Hospice Services**

905-240-4522, 1-877-668 (ext. 9414)  
[www.vondurham.org](http://www.vondurham.org)

### **Family Services Durham**

905-666-6239, 1-888-721-0622 (ext. 5)  
Individual, couple and family counselling in-person, over the phone, or by video call

“Grief is not a disorder, a disease, or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical, and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve.”

– Earl Grollman

Journaling can be a powerful tool to help process your emotions, understand your grief, and find moments of hope. By giving yourself the space to reflect and write, you may uncover feelings you didn't realize you were holding and gain insight into how this loss is shaping your life. These prompts are here to guide you through your grief at your own pace. Remember, there's no need for perfection or pressure—just honesty and self-compassion as you navigate this path. Take your time, and allow your heart to speak.

- How does your grief show up in your body? Are there physical sensations that accompany your sadness or loss?
- How has your relationship with grief changed since the loss?
- What emotions do you feel the most right now? How do they differ from when you first experienced the loss?
- When you remember the person or thing you've lost, what memories come to mind first?
- What are some things people have said to you about your grief that have been comforting or unhelpful?
- How has your grief changed the way you view life, relationships, or the world around you?
- If grief were a physical object or creature, how would you describe it? What would it look like or feel like?
- What does self-compassion look like for you right now?
- What would you like to ask or tell someone else who is grieving?
- How has your daily life changed since the loss? What routines or rituals have you found comfort in?
- What are some small things you can do today to honor your grief?
- How do you hope your grief will evolve over time?
- What would you like others to understand about your grief?
- What are some things you've learned about yourself through your grieving process?
- Describe a moment where you felt a sense of peace or relief during your grief. What contributed to that feeling?



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