

# What influences our grief?

It's almost a cliché to say that everyone grieves differently – but in fact they do. Here are some of the reasons why.

The circumstances surrounding a death which challenge our beliefs about the way the world should work – what we consider to be 'normal', what we think is 'fair' and 'just', will often be hard to comprehend and will make no sense to us. This may make the resulting grief more intense, more difficult to navigate.

Circumstances like:

- Child death versus adult death
- Young versus old
- Healthy versus sick
- Senseless versus inevitable

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*There is no easy way  
around grief - no recipe,  
no roadmap to follow.*

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Here are more variables to consider about you and your grief:

- What was unique about the relationship between you and the person who died? What were the positives and the negatives?
- How close was the attachment? This is something that is often overlooked. Attachment is not limited to a long life or how many years you've known someone. Being 'attached' to the pending birth of a child, to a lover, to a relationship that's ended, to an anticipated way of life – all of this creates a great sense of loss and grief when it ends
- What were the circumstances of the death – was it sudden, untimely, expected? How was the news broken? Are there legal authorities or the media involved?
- Was there time to say goodbye? Is there 'unfinished business' which should have been spoken about?
- Do you have sensitive people to rely on for support by way of family, church, colleagues, doctor, employer, social network? Do you have a close friend to talk to?
- How do you usually handle stressful situations – do you clam up or communicate easily; are you open to offers of help; do you have a range of positive coping strategies to put into action or do you block out reality with alcohol, drugs or a frenzied pace of activity?
- Has this event come at a time when you have other personal crises to deal with? Could you become overloaded with emotions? Could there be too much happening all at once?
- Is there unresolved grief? Are there other losses somewhere in the past that have been swept under the carpet and may therefore affect the grief that's come up now?

Adapted from:  
"Stuck for Words – What to say to someone who is grieving"  
Doris Zagdanski