

FREE RESOURCE GUIDE

A Compassionate Guide

Prepared by Chaplain Joyce LLC · San Diego, CA

All faiths and none. All losses and all stages.

Understanding Grief

Grief is not a single emotion. It's a whole process, and it looks different for everyone.

Grief is a natural response to loss, but it doesn't follow a straight line or a predictable schedule. Whether you're navigating the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, a significant life change, or anticipated loss, your experience is valid exactly as it is.

Types of Grief You May Experience

Anticipatory Grief:

Grief experienced before a loss occurs, often when caring for someone with a terminal illness or facing an expected major change.

Complicated Grief:

Grief that intensifies over time rather than easing, significantly impacting daily functioning. May benefit from professional support.

Disenfranchised Grief:

Grief that isn't socially recognized or validated, such as the loss of a pet, a miscarriage, or the death of someone not considered "close enough."

Cumulative Grief:

Multiple losses building on each other, where new losses stir up feelings from past, unprocessed grief.

There is no "right" way to grieve. Your process is your process. What matters is that you allow yourself space to feel what you feel, without judgment.

5 Practical Coping Strategies

Small, consistent practices can gently carry you through the hardest days.

1. Journaling Prompts

- What is one thing I need someone to understand about what I'm going through?
- What would I say to a friend who was experiencing this same loss?
- What is one small moment of beauty or comfort I noticed today?
- If I could tell my past self one thing right now, it would be...

2. Grounding & Breathing Exercises

- 5-4-3-2-1 Sensory Grounding: Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can hear, 3 you can touch, 2 you can smell, 1 you can taste.
- Box Breathing: Inhale 4 counts, hold 4 counts, exhale 4 counts, hold 4 counts. Repeat 4 times.
- Place your hand on your chest and breathe slowly, feeling your heartbeat. This anchors you to the present moment.

3. Movement & Body-Based Practices

- A short walk outside, even just around the block, can interrupt cycles of rumination.
- Gentle stretching or yoga helps release the physical tension grief holds in the body.
- Movement doesn't need to be exercise, it can be dancing in your kitchen or tending a garden.

4. Social Connection

- Share something real with one trusted person today. Vulnerability deepens connection.
- Let someone know what you need, even if it's just sitting together in silence.
- Grief shared is grief halved. Isolation amplifies it.

5. Knowing When to Seek Professional Help

- If grief feels unending and you can't imagine ever feeling better, reach out to a grief counselor.
 - If you're having thoughts of self-harm or feel stuck in despair, please contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988).
 - Signs that professional support may help: inability to function at work/home, persistent physical symptoms, isolation lasting months, dangerous behaviors.
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What Spiritual Care Offers That Therapy Doesn't

Spiritual care and clinical therapy serve different, complementary roles in healing.

Grief often touches parts of us that go beyond the cognitive, the emotional, and the behavioral. Spiritual care meets you at those deeper places, offering presence, meaning-making, and sacred space.

Spiritual Care	Clinical Therapy
Non-denominational, inclusive spiritual presence	Evidence-based therapeutic modalities
Exploration of meaning, purpose, and hope	Diagnosis and treatment of mental health conditions
Ritual, prayer, and contemplative practices	Structured trauma processing (EMDR, CBT, etc.)
Accompaniment through major life transitions	Medication management when appropriate
Integration of faith, doubt, and grief	Clinical assessment and treatment planning
Space for silence, reflection, and sacred pause	Focused skill-building and behavioral change
Support for those with or without religious background	Mental health diagnosis and care coordination

A note on integration:

Spiritual care and therapy work beautifully together. Many people find that working with both a therapist and a chaplain gives them the most complete support. Chaplain Joyce can work alongside your existing care team to provide the spiritual and existential layer that clinical work may not address.

"Grief is the price we pay for love. And it is also a path toward deeper love, if we let it be."

Chaplain Joyce LLC

Resources in San Diego

Local support to help you continue forward on your journey.

Chaplain Joyce LLC

Professional Spiritual Care & Chaplaincy Services

San Diego, CA · In-Person & Virtual Sessions Available

Book a Session: elevateos-4.polsia.app/book

Additional Grief Support Resources

The Dougy Center · dougy.org

Support groups for children, teens, and families grieving a death.

GriefShare · griefshare.org

Facilitated support groups across the country and online.

National Alliance for Grieving Children & Teens · childgrief.org

Resources and education for supporting grieving children.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline · 988lifeline.org

Free, confidential support 24/7 for anyone in crisis. Call or text 988.

Crisis Text Line · crisistextline.org

Text HOME to 741741 for free crisis support via text message.

Center for Grief & Loss (San Diego) · sdhospice.org

San Diego-based grief support services and counseling.

You don't have to walk this path alone.

Whatever you believe, wherever you are, however long it's been: if you're grieving, you're welcome here. Take the next step and book a session at elevateos-4.polsia.app/book.

