

Grief and prolonged grief disorder (PGD)
Information for individuals
and families

NCMH
National Centre for Mental Health
Canolfan Iechyd Meddwl Genedlaethol

Grief and prolonged grief disorder



Grief is the profound sadness and sense of loss that follows the death of someone you care about. It's a deeply personal experience and everyone grieves in their own way. There is no right or wrong way to grieve.

This leaflet is designed to help you understand grief and provides practical tips for managing it. It also provides information on prolonged grief disorder (PGD), a condition in which grief lasts longer than expected and significantly disrupts daily life.

Understanding grief

Grief involves a range of emotions. These responses are a natural part of grieving and typically become easier to manage with time:

- Sadness - sorrow and tearfulness
- Shock - difficulty accepting the loss, especially if it was unexpected
- Yearning - intense desire to be with the person you lost
- Anger - frustration directed at the situation, the person you lost, or yourself
- Guilt - regrets about things done or left undone
- Anxiety - worries about the future or your ability to cope
- Loneliness - feeling isolated or misunderstood
- Relief - a sense of release, particularly after a prolonged illness
- Numbness - emotional detachment or inability to feel
- Confusion - trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

Coping with grief

Everyone deals with grief in their own way, but here are some tips that might help:

Allow yourself to grieve

It's natural to experience a range of emotions. Give yourself permission to feel and express your grief.

Create a self-care plan

Find time for activities that bring you comfort and happiness, whether it's reading, taking walks, or spending time in nature.

Be kind to yourself

Treat yourself with the same care and understanding you would offer a friend. Accept your feelings as they come and remember it's okay to have tough days.

Talk about it

Share your feelings with someone you trust, whether it's a friend, family member, or a support group.

Look after yourself

Eat well, get enough sleep, and exercise.

Stick to a routine

Maintain daily activities and set small, manageable goals to create structure and a sense of normality in your day.

Honour their memory

Discover meaningful ways to remember your loved one, such as creating a memory box or engaging in an activity they enjoyed.



What is prolonged grief disorder (PGD)?

While grief is a normal response to loss, sometimes it doesn't ease with time and can stop you from living your life. This is known as prolonged grief disorder (PGD).

PGD happens when someone's grief lasts longer than expected, six to twelve months, and becomes overwhelming. The intense sadness and longing do not fade, making it difficult to manage daily activities and responsibilities at home, work, school, or in social settings.

Signs of PGD

Constant longing

A deep and ongoing yearning for the person you lost that doesn't ease over time.

Always thinking about the deceased

You might find yourself constantly thinking about the person you lost, making it hard to focus on anything else.

Struggling to accept the death

Finding it very difficult to accept that the person is really gone.

Feeling numb

Feeling emotionally shut off or distant from others.

Loss of identity

Feeling like a part of you is missing or that your life has lost its meaning.

What increases the risk of PGD?

PGD can affect anyone, but certain factors can increase the risk of it occurring.

How the person died

If the death was sudden or violent, like in an accident or suicide, it can increase the risk of PGD.

Close relationship

The closer you were to the person who died, the higher the chance of experiencing prolonged grief.

Mental health history

If you've had mental health problems before, you might be more likely to develop PGD.

Lack of social support

Not having enough support from friends or family can make PGD more likely.

When to seek help

Grief is a personal experience, but it's important to seek help if:

- you're struggling with day-to-day activities
- you've withdrawn from people and activities you used to enjoy
- you feel overwhelmed or unable to cope
- you're having thoughts of harming yourself
- you think you might be experiencing PGD

Useful websites

These organisations can provide support for people struggling with grief and bereavement.

Cruse

Promoting the wellbeing of bereaved people and enabling anyone suffering bereavement caused by death to understand their grief and cope with their loss.

helpline@cruse.org | 0808 808 1677

cruse.org.uk

2Wish

Offers support for those affected by the death of a child or young person.

info@2wish.org.uk | 01443 853 125

2wish.org.uk

The Anna Phillips Foundation

Supports and empowers people with trauma, suicide, and grief related mental health challenges by offering a range of green care and nature-based activities to help recovery.

info@annaphillips.org | 07594 941253

annaphillips.org

Community and Care Wellbeing Service (CCAWS)

Community care and wellbeing service for diverse communities. Provides services including counselling, befriending, advocacy, information and advice.

info@ccaws.org | 029 2054 4820

ccaws.org.uk



Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

Offers UK peer-led support to adults impacted by suicide loss including local and virtual groups, phone/email support and an online community forum.

email.support@uksobs.org | 0300 111 5065

uksobs.com

The Good Grief Trust

Organisation run by the bereaved for the bereaved. Offers support services including local and national information and advice and support cafes.

hello@thegoodgrieftrust.org

thegoodgrieftrust.org

National Centre for Mental Health

We are working to develop and evaluate a digital guided self-help programme for the treatment of prolonged grief disorder, also known as PGD.

The digital treatment has been developed in collaboration with people with lived experience of PGD and professional experts in the field. Find out more at: ncmh.info/pgd-help



Join our NCMH research community

Join our research community today and help us better understand conditions like prolonged grief disorder. The aim of our research is to improve diagnosis, treatment, and support for people in the future.

Joining our community is easy - it involves completing an online sign-up form which takes about 15 minutes and will ask you about:

- personal information, like date of birth and ethnicity
- mental and physical health
- lifestyle

To join, visit: ncmh.info/join

Or scan:



Stay up to date



@thencmh



@ncmh_wales



/walesmentalhealth



www.ncmh.info

Produced by the National Centre for Mental Health.

The information in this leaflet is correct at the time of printing. Printed February 2025.

NCMH is funded by Welsh Government through Health and Care Research Wales.

Mae'r wybodaeth hon hefyd ar gael drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. I ofyn am gopi, cysylltwch â ni.

info@ncmh.info
029 2068 8401



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES



CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD



PRIFYSGOL
BANGOR

UNIVERSITY



SWANSEA
UNIVERSITY

Prifysgol Abertawe