

# Relationship Changes During Grief

**You're not alone.  
We're here to support.**

There is no timeline for grief. Knowing there are supports and resources available can give hope as you move through your grief.

Grief and mourning responses differ from person to person even when they are experiencing shared grief. You may notice changes in your relationships. Those around you may be unable to support you as they did in the past or you may find that (for right now) you are unable to take on the role you had prior to your loved one's death. After the death of a loved one, a person is forever changed, which can cause relationships with others to naturally change as well.

## What You May Notice



### Shift in Roles or Responsibilities

Shifting roles may create confusion initially as people within a relationship/family system adapt to new routines, and responsibilities. You may find you are taking on a caregiver role or even stepping back, allowing yourself to be cared for.

- Be prepared for changes in your relationships as stress increases.
- Practice your own coping skills and offer to support others (if possible) with theirs. For example, go for a drive or walk, make a meal to share, sit, and listen.
- Talk about changes in roles you have noticed and how this is impacting you (are they helpful or hurtful?).
- Discuss actions that need to be taken within the home (finances, paying bills, child care, etc.).
- Communicate your feelings, needs, and wants. It is OK to set boundaries with others when you need to.

Grief is unique and shared grief is the same. Although you may be noticing changes within yourself and others, the strain in your relationships can be temporary.

Be patient and open with others, communicate your needs, listen to the needs of others, and seek out professional support if you feel it's needed. With no judgment, give yourself opportunities to heal and your relationships time to adjust to the changes you are facing together.





### Different Grieving Practices

Grief and mourning can be different person to person. Some may feel more comfortable distracting themselves with work or family obligations, while others will step away from those responsibilities (if they are able to). When a person's mourning does not match your own, you may feel they are not grieving or grieving correctly, this however, is not the case.

- In shared grief, reflect on the other person's past coping skills to better understand their grief responses. Respect each other's (safe) mourning practices without judgment.



### Changes in Communication

Depending on each person, communication during grief may be difficult. Some may have a hard time expressing their feelings and needs in the moment, whereas others may not be as comfortable showing their vulnerability. Communication is key to support one another and maintain relationships during grief.

- Listen to each other; everyone's experiences will be different (even in shared grief).
- Do not correct or discount emotions that are shared.
- Talk through any worries or concerns for the future.
- Talk about your needs and listen openly without judgment.
- Talk about the changes you have experienced and noticed within yourself and in your relationship.
- If you find that you are unable to communicate with your spouse, partner, child, or parent, seeking professional support can be an option.



### Disconnection

During grief, some may pull away to process their thoughts and emotions, possibly leaving you feeling isolated and lonely. It is important to remember that in shared grief, everyone involved is reflecting on their relationship with the deceased and what life will look like moving forward. This can be overwhelming, making it difficult to support others as they're processing their own grief.

- Set a time to check in with one another.
  - If in the same home, possibly over a shared meal (a time when there is little distraction).
  - If living separately, discuss a best day and time to reach out.
- Do not take this personally.
- If you feel that you are unable to access the support you are needing during your grief, connecting with newer supports can be beneficial (therapists, bereavement groups).

