

What to Know

What have you lost in your life? A parent? A marriage? A job?

Like a lot of men, the emotion you might have the hardest time showing is the grief that results from the losses in your life. All men experience loss. It's a normal part of life.

Lots of things involve loss; such as having to cancel a trip you've looked forward to taking for a long time or watching your team lose the championship. But it's the really tough losses that can devastate you. If you don't live with your children, for example, you face that loss every day.



Loss creates grief, a feeling and process that you must work through. Denial of loss, sadness over it, anger about it, and, finally, acceptance of it are part of the grief process. When you grieve losses, you will work through the stage of the process that many men get stuck in—anger.

The challenge for most men is that they've never been taught how to grieve. They've learned instead that it's not manly to grieve. They've been told to, "Take it like man!" "Get over it!" and "Grow up!" Is that what you learned?

If you've buried losses deep inside of you, they will never go away. The only option you have for keeping people from touching your grief is to become angry. Anger is a shield that keeps people from touching your anger. IT also keeps you from having to deal with your grief. Buried grief, and the anger that comes with it, is toxic. Anger can damage your physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

You must learn to grieve. It is one of the most vital skills you can acquire. When you learn how to grieve, you can deal with past losses and grieve future ones.

What Else

Men and women tend to differ in how they grieve. And that's okay. If you're like a lot of men, you:

1. Don't care as well for your emotional health while you grieve. You might show your emotions rather than talk about them.
2. Don't want to be seen to care too much about your emotional pain. You might say things like, "It doesn't hurt that bad" or "I'm okay."
3. Rely on others—perhaps the mother of your children—to help you understand your emotions, calm down, and keep your emotions in check.
4. Need your own space to work through your grief. You might take time away or want to be alone to think things through.
5. Show anger.
6. Grieve through rituals, such as doing or making something.

Perhaps none of those describe the way in which you grieve. No matter how you grieve, you must do at least four things:

1. Show courage in the face of grief. Allow yourself to grieve instead of burying losses.
2. Talk with trusted others about your grief. Don't talk only with the mother of your children.
3. Take as much time as you need to reflect on your grief and the causes of it. How long the process takes depends a lot on how severe the loss is to you.
4. If, as you grieve, you remember things that you've buried for years that you can't handle, seek the help of a trained counselor.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. How do I grieve? What do I do when I grieve?
2. How well do I grieve? How can I grieve better?
3. What kinds of rituals can help me grieve?
 4. When I need to grieve, who are the friends and family with whom I can talk about it? Do I rely too much on the mother of my children to talk with about my losses?
 5. Do I have any losses I've buried? Are there losses I haven't fully grieved or not grieved at all? Do I need help from a trained counselor to help me grieve any of those losses?

Learn More

Use these nine tips to grieve.

1. Allow yourself to grieve. Don't hide your feelings.
2. Tell people when you need to be alone to think things through.
3. Don't shut others out.
4. Listen to your body and become aware of how your body reacts to grief. Do you get sick to your stomach, for example, or get a headache?
5. Use rituals and activity to work through your grief. If you like to spend time outdoors, for example, go to a park to reflect on your grief.
6. Slow down when you reflect on the cause of your grief. Take your time.
7. Stay close to friends you can count on.
8. Stay in good health and work out.
9. Cry if you need to!