

# Bereavement, Grieving and Loss

When a person dies, we say that their family and friends are “**bereaved**”. This means they have **lost** something precious to them and they are **grieving**. Often, clients and families will experience **loss** prior to death; this is called anticipatory grief. Grieving can begin when someone is told they have a terminal illness, or that their course of treatment has not worked. Grieving can also occur with new stages of illness which may result in loss of independence.

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss and can happen suddenly or be expected. Grief is not a linear process; individuals move back and forth through these emotions in different ways, which leads to different feelings at different times. Culture can also affect how you understand and approach the grief process. Some cultures have an estimated “time to grieve” and develop rituals around this. Emotions that one can experience when grieving a loss, can range from:

## Shock, Disbelief, Denial, Numbness

When we experience shock, our body is both reacting and protecting us from the intensity of the experience. Some people experience “numbness”, this should never be confused with lack of caring. Feelings of denial or disbelief will lessen as we begin to acknowledge the loss, the impact it has had and our feelings around this.

## Bargaining

Individuals may reflect over what could have been done differently to prevent the loss from occurring. Some individuals become absorbed in thinking about ways that things could have been better and all the things that will never happen. This is an important stage in grieving loss, however must be resolved to prevent feelings of remorse or guilt.

## Depression, Fatigue, Loss of Interest in Life

Some individuals experience depressive symptoms such as lack of sleep, appetite, energy, motivation and concentration. In addition to physical symptoms, individuals may also experience mental and emotional anguish, loneliness, emptiness, isolation, crying and self-pity.

## Anger, Aguish and Severe Distress

These feelings often occur when an individual feels helpless and powerless to change what has or will occur. Individuals may feel that they have been served an injustice and feel angry, abandoned or resentful towards others or one’s higher power.

## Acceptance and Planning for the Future

The old adage “time heals all wounds” is not necessarily true, however what time does allow for, is the individual to experience a range of emotions, deemed necessary to gaining acceptance. There is no set time for the grieving process.

The logo for G11C, featuring the letters 'G11C' in a stylized blue font with two small circles above the '1's.

geriatrics  
interprofessional  
interorganizational  
collaboration



**Lakehead**  
UNIVERSITY

