

2-MINUTE TIP:

PROLONGED GRIEF - ASSESSMENT OF 7 THEMES

Finding Your Grief Pattern and What Each Theme Signifies

In your profile on these themes, what are your dominant stuck points. Focus your therapeutic work there first!

1: Difficulty Accepting Reality of the Death

- "It still doesn't feel real that they're gone or it's hard to believe it." "I expect them to walk through the door or call." "I keep their belongings exactly as they left them" "I avoid situations that would make the death feel too real." "I talk to him and dream about him."
- If this is you: Your brain is protecting you from overwhelming truth by keeping you in a state of partial shock/disbelief. Healing involves gradual exposure to reality. "What would fully accepting the death require you to face?" "What are you protecting yourself from by staying in disbelief?"

2: Ambivalence About the Deceased

- "I had a complicated/conflicted relationship with them." "I feel guilty that I feel some relief they're gone." "I'm angry at them, even though they died."
- If this is you: Grieving requires permission to feel contradictory emotions simultaneously. You're mourning who they weren't.

3: Guilt

- "I blame myself for things I did or didn't do" "Our last interaction haunts me" "I should have seen the signs/done more/been better" "I feel responsible for their death somehow" "I can't forgive myself"
- If this is you: You're carrying responsibility that likely isn't yours to carry. Healing requires reality-testing your guilt and extending yourself the compassion you'd offer a friend. You imagine you controlled or could predict events you could not.

4: Dependency on Functions the Deceased Did in Your Life

- "I don't know how to manage life without what they did." "They handled [finances-decisions-social plans etc.]" "I feel incompetent and helpless now." "I relied on their emotional support to function, now I'm alone." "I'm falling apart practically since they died"
- If this is you: Healing requires practical skill-building, finding new supports, AND challenging your negative beliefs about your own capability. You're more competent than grief allows you to see.

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5: Identity Loss

- "I don't know who I am without them." "My whole identity was tied to this relationship." "I feel like part of me died with them." "I can't imagine a future version of myself." "Being a [spouse/parent/child/friend] was who I was."
- If this is you: This requires identity reconstruction – you're not replacing them or the relationship—you're discovering who you can become while still carrying them with you. You discover activities and commit to new relationships as yourself, not as connected to the deceased.

6: Early Loss

- "I lost someone important early in life and I'm missing something internally." "Every significant loss brings me back to feeling like a child." "I never learned healthy ways to cope with loss." "I didn't have secure attachment growing up." "Current grief feels way bigger than it 'should' because it triggers old wounds."
- If this is you: You're grieving multiple losses simultaneously—the current one and the unresolved childhood one. Healing requires addressing both the early attachment wound – its impact in your life – and the current loss.

7: Traumatic Loss

- "The way they died is as hard as the fact they died." "I have intrusive images/thoughts about the death." "The death was sudden, violent, or unexpected" "I'm triggered by reminders of how they died." "I feel traumatized, not just grief-stricken."
- If this is you: You need trauma-focused care before or alongside grief work. The trauma of HOW they died can block your ability to grieve WHO you lost.

- Summary: When a person experiences Prolonged Grief, he or she may have sadness, depression, nightmares, and other symptoms. Using this 7-theme set of questions can untangle the emotional field and help define where a person is stuck and how to start getting through the impasse towards healing and recovery.

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