

# Making Peace with Grief in the Last Chapter of Life

When a loved one receives a serious diagnosis or shows signs of decline, life changes for everyone around them. There are new routines and hard conversations about care. There is also grief even before someone passes.

This is a process called anticipatory grief. It happens when someone you love starts forgetting names, losing mobility or needing help with simple tasks. Studies show that watching someone decline affects our brain much like traditional grief. For example, caregivers of people with dementia show symptoms of stress and depression even before the end of their loved one's life (National Library of Medicine).

## Stages of Grief

The five stages of grief describe how people move through denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and eventually, acceptance. Not everyone follows these steps in order. You may even feel some all at once.

## Appreciate Today

About 40% of U.S. caregivers say that their responsibilities make them stressed (Guardian Life). This is especially true when caring for someone at the end of life. To deal with these feelings, shift your focus to appreciate what is happening in the present. Is your loved one smiling at their favorite music? Were they able to sit outside and feel the sun on their face? Spend some time making new memories with them.

Grief doesn't have to steal the joy of today. Encourage your loved one to do things they enjoy like bake, listen to music, take walks or tell family stories. If you see your loved one live fully, it can help you feel less afraid.

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National Library of Medicine

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## Reach out for Help

You don't have to carry these feelings alone. Talk to a counselor, a support group or a trusted friend. Hospice services offer grief support for caregivers. Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) may also be a source of support. Many EAPs provide specialists who help caregivers find trusted care, hospice and support. They offer personal phone calls and search for in-home care, grief counseling and other local resources.

## #GrowThroughGrief #GriefSupport

If you or someone you know is struggling with a loss and needs support, you can find more resources at [Good Grief](#).