The Four Challenges of Grief Model



(based on Worden's Four Tasks of Mourning model)

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This model highlights the four challenges we face during the grief journey. This can help us understand what needs to happen in order to process a bereavement.

Challenges 1, 2 and 3 may not necessarily be completed in a particular order as everyone's grief journey is different. You may find that you have bad days and good days as you move back and forth between Challenges 2 and 3. Some days you may need to work through your grief (Challenge 2). While other days you may feel able to take a family outing, see friends, go shopping or join a new social group, for example (Challenge 3).

When you have worked through Challenges 2 and 3 it is possible, in time, to move to Challenge 4. There is no timeframe for this process - for some people this may take a few months. For other people, it may take up to two years or more.

Challenge 1: Accept the reality of the loss

This can take time - the reality may not start to sink in until months after the death of a loved one. Even when a death is expected - there can still be shock and a sense that it hasn't really happened.

Challenge 2: Work through the pain of grief

It's important to feel the pain of loss and slowly work through your emotions. Avoiding or blocking out your grief can disrupt or delay the grieving process. This challenge may sometimes start before the person died if they were ill for some time.

Challenge 3: Adapt to life as it is now

It can be very hard to start to re-adjust and get used to life without your loved one. This may involve living in an empty house, having to manage a house or finances by yourself or taking on new roles previously played by the person who died. Starting to adapt may also involve taking part in social activities again, making new friends and doing new things.

Challenge 4: Find an ongoing relationship and connection with the person who has died - whilst moving forward with your life

Coming to terms with your loss and starting to adapt to life as it is now-does not mean that you have 'got over' losing the person who died or that you have forgotten them. Life will never be exactly the same again but it is possible, in time, to move forward whilst still keeping the person you have lost as an important part of your life and who you are. This is known as having 'continuing bonds' with the person who died.