



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Grief and Bereavement Support Groups

These groups bring together people navigating loss, offering a place to grieve among others who understand. They come in two broad forms. Peer-led support groups offer shared experience without a clinical curriculum, often through hospice programs, faith communities, and organizations such as GriefShare and The Compassionate Friends. Clinician-led therapy groups address grief that has become prolonged or complicated. Prolonged Grief Disorder, added to the DSM-5-TR in 2022, names grief that stays intensely disruptive beyond twelve months.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for those ready to be in a group and to grieve alongside others on similar timelines.
- Prolonged, severely impairing grief may call for clinician-led therapy, with or instead of peer support.
- Acute suicidal thoughts need crisis support first. Call or text 988.

What it's for

Anyone navigating significant loss who wants peer community and support.

General groups welcome anyone grieving. Loss-specific groups are listed separately.

People who find comfort, not overwhelm, in the shared stories of others.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 Sessions run 60 to 90 minutes, in person and online.

2 Peer groups are open sharing, sometimes around themes like holidays or anniversaries.

3 Structured programs like GriefShare run 13 weeks with video content and discussion.

Grief groups have a real, if modest, evidence base.

- A meta-analysis of 32 studies found bereavement groups produced **small but significant gains** in grief and depression, largest for people with elevated grief.¹
- A review of mutual-help groups found **consistent benefit** for wellbeing, coping, and social support, with bereavement among the most studied formats.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Give it more than one visit. Comfort in a grief group often builds over a few sessions.

You set the pace. Listening is participating. You never have to share before you're ready.

Match the format to you. Some want open sharing, others a structured curriculum.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1** Is this peer-led support or a clinician-led therapy group?
- 2** Is it open-ended or a set curriculum like the 13-week format?
- 3** Is there a guideline on minimum time since the loss for new members?

Ready to find a group?

Browse 2,000+ therapy and support groups in all 50 states.

Free to browse · No account needed · thegroupguide.com



If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Grief and Bereavement Support Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Maass, U., Hofmann, L., Perlinger, J., & Wagner, B. Effects of bereavement groups: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Death Studies* (2022), 46(3), 708–718.
- 2 Pistrang, N., Barker, C., & Humphreys, K. Mutual help groups for mental health problems: a review of effectiveness studies. *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2008), 42(1–2), 110–121.

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