

Pain Foundations

# Moving Forward

## Loss and grief

Grief is the way you react to loss.

- Grief is a normal and natural process but can be difficult to work through.
- It can affect your emotions, thoughts, and behaviour. It can even affect how you feel physically, including making pain worse.

Living with persistent pain can lead to many small and big losses, which can add up over time.



Image by John Hain from Pixabay

**Ambiguous grief** is the loss of parts of your life such as loss of your sense of self, confidence, sense of freedom or control of your life. Describing or resolving these things is not easy.

**Anticipatory grief** is your feelings of grief even before a loss occurs. It includes things like a loss of plans for the future, or dreams, due to unexpected changes in your life.

Acknowledging your losses and your feelings of grief can help you to process your grief. You then can move through the stages of grieving.

## The six stages of grief

Elisabeth Kubler-Ross and David Kessler developed the “Six Stages of Grief” model. It explains the process of grief with a major loss like the end of a relationship or loss of job. It also applies to the ambiguous and anticipatory grief that comes with living with chronic pain.

Each stage involves a range of emotions. You need to move through these emotions to grieve your loss.

### The Six Stages of Grief



Based on the work of Kubler-Ross and David Kessler

The authors explain that grief is not a straight line. It is often like a roller coaster where you go through the different stages, back and forth, as you process the loss.

**Denial** - A state of shock and refusal. It provides a healthy buffer for you to catch up with reality.

**Anger** - An emotional experience. An acknowledgement that this was not how you wanted life to go.

**Bargaining** - Feeling like you will do anything for life to be what it once was.

**Depression** - Emotional changes at a very deep level. It is an appropriate response to a loss or a life-changing situation.

**Acceptance** - Acknowledging there has been a change or loss and taking a step to move forward. You find control in acceptance.

**Finding Meaning** - A way to live with the loss, develop resilience, and continue to live a meaningful life despite the sadness. Having a greater appreciation for the things that bring value and joy to your life.

## How to move forward with grief

- Acknowledge your losses and grief.
- Use your self-compassion and self-care tools.
- Connect with the people who are your supports to let them know how you feel. Speak to a healthcare provider if you feel stuck.
- Identify what is important to you. Spend your time on the things and people that bring meaning to your life.
- Explore your personal values.

## Personal values

Your values are key beliefs that guide and motivate your thoughts, attitudes, choices, and actions.

- The type of person you want to be.
- The way you treat yourself and others.
- The way you interact with the world around you.

Life can be more content and satisfying when you know your values. You respect your values through choices and actions that honour them.

*It is not hard to make decisions  
once you know what your values are.*

- Roy E. Disney

**What stood out to me in this section?**

**Questions I still have on this topic**

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## Values Checklist

Below are some common values. You may think of others that aren't on the list.

Put a ✓ beside the values that are **most important** to you.

<b>Acceptance or self-acceptance</b>	To be accepting of myself, others, life, etc.
<b>Adventure</b>	To be adventurous; to actively explore novel or stimulating experiences
<b>Assertiveness</b>	To respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
<b>Authenticity</b>	To be authentic, genuine, and real; to be true to myself
<b>Balance</b>	To have mental and emotional steadiness
<b>Beauty</b>	To have the qualities of a person or a thing that give pleasure to the senses
<b>Caring or self-care</b>	To be caring toward myself, others, the environment, etc.
<b>Compassion or self-compassion</b>	To act kindly toward myself and others in pain
<b>Connection</b>	To engage fully in whatever I'm doing and be fully present with others
<b>Contribution or generosity</b>	To contribute, give, help, assist, or share
<b>Cooperation</b>	To be cooperative and collaborative with others
<b>Courage</b>	To be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
<b>Creativity</b>	To be creative or innovative
<b>Comfort</b>	To feel ease, strength, and hope
<b>Curiosity</b>	To be curious, open-minded, and interested; to explore and discover
<b>Discipline</b>	To have orderly or regimented conduct or pattern of behavior
<b>Diversity</b>	To be open to differing or variable elements or qualities
<b>Effort</b>	To produce something through exertion or trying
<b>Encouragement</b>	To encourage and reward behavior that I value in myself or others
<b>Excitement</b>	To seek, create, and engage in activities that are exciting or stimulating
<b>Fairness and justice</b>	To be fair and just to myself or others
<b>Family and friends</b>	To have caring, meaningful relationships with others
<b>Fitness</b>	To maintain or improve or look after my physical and mental health
<b>Flexibility</b>	To adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
<b>Freedom and independence</b>	To choose how I live and help others do likewise
<b>Friendliness</b>	To be friendly, companionable, or agreeable toward others
<b>Forgiveness or self-forgiveness</b>	To be forgiving toward myself or others
<b>Fun and humor</b>	To be fun loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
<b>Gratitude</b>	To be grateful for and appreciative of myself, others, and life
<b>Health</b>	To be in a state of thriving or doing well
<b>Honesty</b>	To be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
<b>Imagination</b>	To use the mind to form new ideas and images
<b>Industry</b>	To be industrious, hardworking, and dedicated
<b>Intimacy</b>	To open up, reveal, and share myself, emotionally or physically

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<b>Kindness</b>	To be kind, considerate, nurturing, or caring toward myself or others
<b>Learning</b>	To acquire knowledge or skill by instruction or study
<b>Love</b>	To act lovingly or affectionately toward myself or others
<b>Loyalty</b>	To be faithful toward another person, cause, ideal, or custom
<b>Mindfulness</b>	To be open to, engaged in and curious about the present moment
<b>Nurturance</b>	To provide affectionate care and attention
<b>Order</b>	To be orderly and organized
<b>Patience</b>	To go through difficulty or strain calmly and without haste
<b>Peace</b>	To be in a state of tranquility or quiet
<b>Persistence or commitment</b>	To continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.
<b>Play</b>	To enjoy exercise or activity for amusement
<b>Productivity</b>	To be effective in bringing about results
<b>Respect or self-respect</b>	To treat myself and others with care and consideration
<b>Responsibility</b>	To be responsible and accountable for my actions
<b>Risk</b>	To have a possibility of loss, injury, or hazard
<b>Safety and security</b>	To secure, protect, or ensure my own safety or that of others
<b>Sensuality and pleasure</b>	To create or enjoy pleasurable and sensual experiences
<b>Sexuality</b>	To explore or express my sexuality
<b>Simplicity</b>	To enjoy a state of being simple or uncomplicated
<b>Skillfulness</b>	To continually practice and improve my skills and apply myself fully
<b>Spirituality</b>	To have a deep sense of belonging and connectedness relating to something bigger than oneself
<b>Spontaneity</b>	To do or say things freely and naturally
<b>Stability</b>	To be steady in purpose and not easily changed
<b>Supportiveness</b>	To be supportive, helpful and available to myself or others
<b>Trust</b>	To be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable
<b>Wisdom</b>	To be able to see beneath the surface of things
<b>Other</b>	

The top 5 values that are important to me are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

3 other values that are important to me are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from the TAPMI with permission 2021. <https://tapmipain.ca>

## Life Compass: A moving forward activity

### Step 1:

In the main part of each large box, write a few key words about what is important or meaningful to you in this part of life. What sort of person do you want to be? What sort of personal strengths and qualities do you want to build? What do you want to achieve?

If a box seems irrelevant to you, just leave it blank. If you are stuck on a box, then skip it, and come back to it later. It is okay if the same words appear in several or all boxes because this helps you identify core values that cut through many parts of life.

Family, Relationships

Health, Self-care

Spirituality

Leisure, Recreation

Personal Growth

Work, School, Community

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Adapted from [Russ Harris' Happiness Trap](#) Life Compass Worksheet, 2014

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**Step 2:**

In the upper small square inside each box, mark on a scale of 0 to 10 how important these values are to you, at this point in your life. 0 means no importance. 10 means extremely important. It is okay if several squares all have the same score.

**Step 3:**

In the lower small square, mark on a scale of 0 to 10 how effectively you are living by these values right now. 0 means not at all. 10 means living by them fully. Again, it is okay if several squares all have the same score.

**Step 4:**

Look at what you've written. What does this tell you? What is important in your life? What might you currently be neglecting? When looking over this document, imagine how to bring these different values into your life.

## Resources

### Videos



#### [Pain BC Chronic Pain Anger and Grief](#)

Watch a one hour webinar on managing anger and grief related to chronic pain.

### Websites

#### [Canadian Grief and Bereavement Resource Repository](#)

Explore links to online support for coping with different types of grief.



#### [CAMH Loss grief and healing](#)

Learn about different types of losses and traumas, and how to move forward.

#### [BC Bereavement Helpline](#)

Connects to grief support services within BC. Free of cost.



#### [CFS and Fibromyalgia Grieving Your Losses](#)

Tips for responding to health-related loss and grief.

#### [Institute for Chronic Pain](#)

Read article on Finding Hope in Acceptance.



### Books

**It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand** by Megan Devine, 2017.

**Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief** by Martha Hickman, 1994.

**The Grief Recovery Handbook, 20th Anniversary Expanded Edition: The Action Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Losses including Health, Career, and Faith** by John Hames, 2017.

**A Liberated Mind: How to Pivot Toward What Matters** by Steven Hayes, 2020.

**When Life Hits Hard: How to Transcend Grief, Crisis, and Loss with Acceptance and Commitment Therapy** by Russ Harris, 2021. [Chapter 1 Preview.](#)