

Grieving the Loss of a Loved One to Overdose

Grief Is Complicated

Grief is an emotional response caused when something you know, are comfortable with, or desire ends or changes. Often grief can make you feel numb, sad, angry, detached, and a number of other emotions, all of which are normal to feel while grieving.

Grief is different for everyone. While it can be painful at times, it should not be rushed. With time and support, you can feel better, though it's important to remember that **grieving isn't linear**. You can, and most likely will, go back and forth in your grieving process.



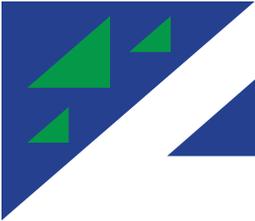
While grieving the loss of a loved one is hard enough, deaths due to drug overdoses are often accompanied with complicated grief.

Overdose Deaths Complicate Grief

While grief is normal, overdose deaths can cause complicated grief. Grief is complicated when the intensity of your grief doesn't decrease over time. In some cases, **the symptoms of your grief can even get worse over time rather than improving.**

When grief is complicated, it can also cause new symptoms, such as trouble keeping normal routines, isolation from others, withdrawing from social activities, experience depression or self-blame, believing you could have prevented the death, feeling that life is no longer worth living, or wishing you had died along with your loved one.¹

If you're worried about any feelings or reactions you're experiencing, contact a professional grief counselor. [You can find one at Psychology Today.](#) If you're thinking of harming or killing yourself, [please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK.](#)



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Coping with Grief

There are many ways to cope with grief. The G.A.P. Network shares these strategies:

- **Share your thoughts, feelings, and memories with others.**
- Accept support from friends and family.
- **Exercise. Sleep well. Eat healthy food.**
- Use religion, philosophy, poetry, music, art, gardening, and walks in nature to gain relief and understanding.
- **Have fun. It isn't disrespectful.**
- Postpone major decisions for now.
- **Give yourself time and permission to grieve. Be patient with yourself.**
- Resist the temptation to use drugs or alcohol. These can interfere with the grieving process and may become an unhealthy coping mechanism.



[Learn more strategies at preventionactionalliance.org/gap](https://preventionactionalliance.org/gap).

About Us

Prevention Action Alliance created this fact sheet with support from the Ohio Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services to support members of The G.A.P. Network, a network of those who have lost a loved one to a drug overdose. Learn more about The G.A.P. Network at preventionactionalliance.org/gap.

Prevention Action Alliance is a 501(c)3 nonprofit in Columbus, Ohio that is dedicated to leading healthy communities in the prevention of substance misuse and the promotion of mental health wellness. Learn more about Prevention Action Alliance at preventionactionalliance.org.



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