

# The Science and Experience of Grief: Psychological, Neuroscientific, and Cultural Perspectives

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## ABSTRACT

*Grief is an intensely distressing and universally encountered phenomenon. It is an emotional and physiological response to loss, particularly due to the death of a close friend or relative. Despite the universality of grief, its expression and trajectories vary considerably across various cultures. This article explores grief through an interdisciplinary lens integrating physical, psychological, neuroscientific, and cultural perspectives. The psychological perspective examines grief's emotional and cognitive dimensions, while the neuroscientific dimension explores brain mechanisms underlying grief. Cultural considerations highlight the diversity of mourning practices and beliefs across societies, demonstrating how sociocultural norms shape the expression and processing of grief. By integrating these perspectives, this article provides a comprehensive understanding of grief, informing therapeutic approaches and social support mechanisms. Additionally, different coping mechanisms such as journaling, therapy, breathwork, music and art, writing a letter to the deceased, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) are discussed. The emerging role of digital platforms and AI in grief assessment and management has also been analyzed. This integrative exploration aims to inform more nuanced therapeutic interventions and social support systems by illuminating the impacts of grief on the mind, body, and society.*

## Keywords

Bereavement, Grief, Loss, Depression, Prolonged grief disorder (PGD), Bereaved, AI.

## Introduction

Grief is a multifaceted response to loss, extending beyond bereavement to include events such as relational dissolution, major life transitions, and existential crises. It also stems from the dissolution of relationships, major life transitions, or the loss of identity [1]. Every human being experiences the loss of someone at a certain point in their lives [2]. With the emergence of psychosomatic medicines, Erich Lindemann studied acute grief by collecting data from the family members who lost their loved ones in the deadliest nightclub Cocoanut Grove fire in 1944 resulting in the death of 492 people. This has been marked as one of the earliest systematic attempts to characterize acute grief reactions in bereaved individuals [3].

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), bereavement is a type of psychosocial stressor that creates a certain level of grief and distress in the affected individual [4]. Although typical grief is not pathologized unless accompanied by major depressive symptoms or functional impairment [5]. Conversely, several theorists and clinicians have emphasized the need to differentiate between normative and maladaptive grief trajectories. Until now, various subtypes of grief including acute grief, chronic grief, anticipatory grief, delayed grief, complicated grief, and prolonged grief disorder have been classified [6-8]. The individual differences are accompanied by the intensity of grief and how long it lasts. While some individuals regain functional capacity relatively quickly, others experience enduring psychological distress that may evolve into diagnosable psychiatric conditions [9]. In worse situations, it can also lead to major psychiatric disorders in the bereaved. The variation in intensity highlights an important question of whether to which extent the grief is considered abnormal, or pathological. Current

literature still lacks robust, empirically validated criteria to differentiate between these trajectories [10].

Grief is also linked with elevated risks of mortality and morbidity. Prior et al., [11] conducted a population-based analysis involving 389,316 bereaved individuals. He reported a high mortality rate with 137, 247 deaths of bereaved individuals during follow-up studies. The relative mortality risk was highest shortly after the loss, with an adjusted hazard ratio (aHR) of 2.50 in the first month, decreasing to 1.38 between six to twelve months post-loss. Moreover, bereavement following child loss is among the most psychologically distressing events, and a significantly higher prevalence of complicated grief is reported in up to 30% of bereaved parents [7].

Most of the theories explaining grief have mainly come from psychological and psychiatric disciplines. Many classic models such as Kübler-Ross's five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) provide a general framework but do not fully capture individual variations (Figure 1). According to these five stages, an individual may initially exhibit difficulty integrating the reality of the loss and feels emotionally detached. This is followed by anger and attempting to control his emotions. In his efforts to control his emotions, he often becomes hopeless and depressed. Finally, he looks for new ways to move forward in his life and adjust to the change [12]. More contemporary models including the dual-process model (DPM) suggest that on the death of a loved one, grieving individuals continuously move between two stages loss-oriented (LO) coping (focusing on emotional pain) and restoration-oriented (RO) coping (engaging in daily activities) [13]. LO coping is accompanied by acute grief including missing the dead, yearning for them, contemplating the loss, confronting feelings, and adjusting to the change by trying to understand the reality. RO coping is accompanied by dealing with secondary stressors associated with the loss. The bereaved person faces many challenges, including the ones that require immediate action (e.g., making arrangements for the funeral, managing legal issues, and dealing with financial concerns). Other challenges include resetting the goals and taking on new roles [14].

Currently, two main theories including attachment theory and cognitive stress theory successfully highlight the grieving process of adapting after the death of a family member or loved one. Attachment theory developed by John Bowlby, suggests that human relationships are fundamental to emotional well-being. When an attachment figure (such as a loved one) is lost, the grieving process is a natural response to the disruption of this bond [15]. Cognitive stress theory proposed by Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman, explains grief as a psychological stressor that individuals must appraise and cope with. It emphasizes how a person perceives

and responds to loss, rather than just the loss itself. If the stress is beyond the limit of enduring and cannot be reversed, then it leads to an overwhelming situation accompanied by chronic stress and depression in the individual [16].

Throughout history, grief has been explored through literature, philosophy, and religion, but in recent decades, scientific research has provided a more structured understanding of its complexities. This article explores the scientific understanding of grief and personal experiences, highlighting the interplay between physiological processes and individual narratives. This article is focused on integrating insights from psychology, neuroscience, and cultural anthropology to offer a comprehensive perspective on how grief affects individuals across different societies. This article also highlights different therapeutic interventions to help individuals recover quickly from their grieving stages. Understanding grief from these perspectives is essential for developing effective therapeutic interventions and fostering societal support for those experiencing loss.

## Methodology

The literature review for this study was conducted using a systematic approach to identify relevant scholarly sources on grief. Multiple academic databases, including PubMed, CINAHL, PsycINFO, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Scopus were searched for peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and authoritative reports published between 2001 and 2025. The search was made by utilizing multiple variations of terms including grief, types of grief, bereaved, psychological aspect of grief, neuroscience perspective of grief, and therapeutic interventions. The inclusion criteria involved studies published in peer-reviewed journals or credible academic sources, research articles, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses that discuss grief from psychological, neuroscientific, and cultural perspectives. The final sample included 113 articles.

## A Multidimensional Perspective of Grief

### Physical effects of grief

Grief exerts a profound impact on mental health. Grief after the death of a loved one is characterized by temporary or long-term dysregulation of emotional and physiological systems. This state is further followed by heightened emotional response, including intense sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, despair, emotional numbness, loss of appetite, lack of concentration, feeling of isolation, a sense of hopelessness, absence of sleep, suicidal thoughts, and social withdrawal. These effects can vary in intensity and duration [17]. Many individuals find it difficult to fall asleep due to intrusive or repetitive cognitions, sadness, or anxiety. The mind remains active, replaying memories or grappling with the reality of loss. Many report recurrent dreams or nightmares centered on the deceased or the circumstances of their loss, which can exacerbate

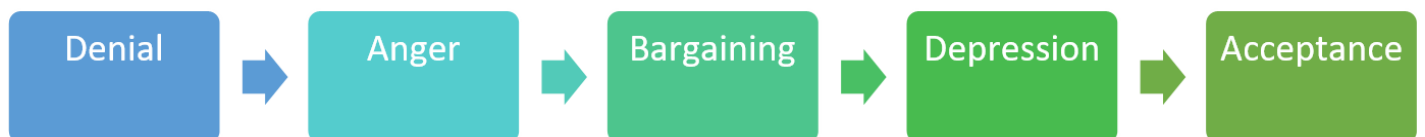


Figure 1: The 5 stages of Grief.

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emotional distress and impair restorative sleep [18,19]. Chronic sleep deprivation, in turn, has been linked to impaired immune function, increased irritability, poor cognitive performance, and a greater risk of developing depressive disorders [20,21].

In some cases, individuals turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms such as substance use to manage the overwhelming affective burden of grief. Substance Use Disorder (SUD) may emerge when individuals use alcohol, sedatives, or illicit drugs to suppress emotional pain or avoid processing the reality of loss [22]. Although these behaviors may offer short-term relief, they often exacerbate grief-related symptoms and hinder emotional recovery. Individuals with complicated or prolonged grief are particularly vulnerable to developing SUD, especially in the absence of strong social support or in the presence of pre-existing substance use tendencies [23]. The bidirectional relationship between grief and addiction can create a deleterious cycle in which substance use impedes emotional processing and disrupts neurobiological healing mechanisms [24,25].

Prolonged grief can lead to an increased risk of several diseases due to the physiological and psychological stress it places on the body. Many previous studies have shown that bereaved individuals are at a higher risk for developing various health conditions, including heart disease, cancer, and high blood pressure [26]. A study conducted by Carey et al., [27] reported a 21-fold increased risk of myocardial infarction (heart attack) within the first day after a significant loss. Salamon, [28] observed acute elevations in systolic blood pressure when participants recalled grief-inducing experiences. These findings highlight the cardiovascular vulnerability associated with acute emotional stress.

The key mechanisms associated with many health complications include heightened inflammation, dysregulation of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, and impaired immune function [29]. Processing grief takes a toll on the brain as it requires significant energy to cope with emotions, memories, and stress [30]. The stress response in the body keeps muscles tense and the nervous system on high alert, leading to physical tiredness [31]. Some individuals feel as if they are having a heart attack due to chest tightness, shortness of breath, or palpitations. This is sometimes referred to as “Takotsubo cardiomyopathy” (broken heart syndrome), a medical condition caused by extreme emotional stress [32]. Others may feel gastrointestinal discomfort often described as a visceral sinking sensation, accompanied by nausea, loss of appetite, or gastrointestinal distress [33]. Grief weakens the immune system by reducing natural killer (NK) cell activity and impairing the body's ability to fight infections [34].

### **Psychology and Neuroscience of Grief**

Grief has no obvious patterns. Currently, there is a lack of knowledge related to grief, but awareness is still progressively growing among academics to discover various modern neuroscience tools to better understand the true science behind grief [35]. There are many questions to be answered: How does the brain respond to grief? What happens to the body? What parts of the brain are involved

in the grieving process? What factors contribute to individual variability in resilience while facing the loss of loved ones? What are the effective therapies for treating grief?.

Many previous neuroimaging studies have revealed the involvement of multiple parts of the brain in the grieving process. These regions are primarily linked to emotional regulation, memory, and social cognition [36]. The prefrontal cortex is a part of the brain involved in cognitive control. This part helps individuals manage their thoughts and emotions related to grief. It has been found that an increase in the activity of the amygdala is linked to the intensity of grief, particularly in complicated grief (persistent, prolonged grief) [37]. The hippocampus is involved in recalling memories of the deceased and emotional responses to those memories [38]. The insula processes bodily sensations related to emotional pain. It also contributes to the feelings of emptiness, sadness, and physical pain associated with grief [39].

Many fMRI and PET studies have shown increased activity in the amygdala, anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), and insula in individuals experiencing grief [40]. It has been found that these brain regions are activated by specific words or photographs related to grief (e.g., name of the dead person, funeral, or loss) [41]. Pathological grief, also called prolonged grief disorder (PGD) is defined as the persistent debilitating symptoms beyond six months post-loss that impair daily functioning [42]. Individuals diagnosed with PGD are at a higher risk of developing mental disorders and long-term functional impairment than people with no PGD [43]. Chronic stress associated with grief can dysregulate the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, leading to elevated cortisol levels and increased susceptibility to depression and cardiovascular diseases [44]. Those with complicated grief also often show hyperactivity in the nucleus accumbens, indicating an ongoing attachment response. The nucleus accumbens have been reported to process the sensation of grief [45]. This region is associated with prolonged grief disorder because, in normal situations, the brain processes the grief-specific words and photos merely as a memory of the person who is no longer there. Cognitively, grief can impair concentration, decision-making, and memory. Some individuals report a sense of unreality or disbelief regarding the loss, reflecting the brain's struggle to integrate the reality of the loss into existing mental frameworks [46].

### **Cultural Perspective of Grief**

While cultures across the globe differ in their customs, religious beliefs, and social practices, one universal truth unites all of humanity: death is inevitable. A detailed understanding of grief from cultural perspectives is vital in assessing and treating grief-related psychopathologies. Death is conceptualized differently in various cultures across the world shaping how individuals and communities experience and express mourning [47]. Cultural norms dictate rituals, behaviors, and coping mechanisms associated with bereavement, highlighting the importance of understanding diverse cultural perspectives on grief. The concept of death and the subsequent grieving process is deeply embedded in cultural and religious worldviews. Some cultures perceive death as a gradual

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transition influenced by factors such as aging, illness, or sleep, while others view it as the definitive cessation of life. Different cultures have unique traditions and customs surrounding death and mourning [48]. For instance, Latino, African American, Navajo, Jewish, and Hindu communities each have distinct beliefs and rituals related to death, grief, and bereavement [49].

In Hinduism culture, a person is believed to have a circular path of life followed by multiple times dying and being born again with each new identity. Conversely, Christians conceptualize death as a transition to another form of existence (spirit). They believe that the righteous ones enter paradise and are rewarded with a joyful life for eternity [47]. Native American tribes view death as a natural transition rather than an end. They have strong beliefs in the spirit world. They have a belief that ancestors continue to guide and watch over the living, and help the family members in emotional healing [50]. In Buddhism, it is believed that the living and dead coexist. If the spirit of the dead is propitiated, then the spirit guards the living one from any harm [51]. Back in history, ancient Egyptian civilization believed in the afterlife, which greatly influenced their grief rituals. Death was not seen as an end but as a journey to the next world, and managing grief involved both emotional and religious practices. Mummification, prayers, and burial ceremonies ensured the safe transition of the soul to the afterlife. Texts containing spells and guidance were placed in tombs to aid the deceased in their journey beyond [52]. Cultural mourning practices also encompass symbolic behaviors. In some cultures, family members express grief by shaving their heads or wearing specific clothing, such as black or white garments, for a designated mourning period [53]. In some other cultures, mourning rituals may include communal celebrations, libations, and dance [47].

Various rituals are also followed in different cultures, like ancestor veneration (e.g., in China and Japan) involves offerings and ceremonies to honor the deceased [54]. Western societies tend to emphasize privacy and individualism in mourning, with funerals serving as a structured yet emotionally restrained outlet for expressing grief. In contrast, many Indigenous traditions incorporate holistic and communal practices such as smudging, storytelling, and shared grieving to honor and maintain spiritual ties with the departed [48]. Despite the variations, there are some similarities in the form of expressing emotions e.g., crying, fear, regret, and anger that are found in every culture while expressing grief for loss. These shared expressions of sorrow underscore the innate human capacity to mourn and connect in the face of loss. However, the way these emotions are externalized, regulated, or suppressed is heavily influenced by cultural expectations and norms [55]. The incorporation of cultural assessments into evaluations ensures that interventions are tailored to align with the individual's cultural background, enhancing their effectiveness.

## **Tools for Coping with Grief**

### **Journaling**

The loss of a loved one can be an emotionally overwhelming experience, often rendering individuals unable to articulate

their inner pain to others. Gradually, the psychological and physical burden of those painful emotions without sharing can be really tormenting and increase the risks of many somatic health complications. In times of grief, writing can provide a nonjudgmental outlet for emotional processing, where a person can share all his unspoken thoughts without the fear of being judged. Journaling has long been recognized as a therapeutic practice, offering individuals a private space to process emotions, reflect on experiences, and navigate complex feelings [56]. Grieving individuals often grapple with finding meaning in their existence after the loss. Grief therapy through journaling is widely recognized as an effective psychotherapeutic tool that fosters self-exploration, emotional clarity, and psychological integration. As individuals reflect on their experiences, they can observe their overall progress. They may also identify patterns, themes, and, coping strategies that contribute to healing [57].

Grief often encompasses a whirlwind of emotions, including sadness, regret, anger, guilt, and confusion. Journaling provides emotional catharsis, allowing individuals to externalize and process these emotions. This act of writing can lead to a deeper understanding of one's internal state and promote emotional release. While writing, the individual might feel more upset, and cry continuously, but after letting your emotions flow on paper, one can experience a subjective sense of relief. The process of writing about one's thoughts and feelings can alleviate stress and anxiety associated with grief [58]. Sutton [59], in his study suggested that journaling can help individuals accept their mental experiences, resulting in fewer negative emotions in response to stressors. Moreover, it has been reported that disclosing deep emotions through writing can boost immune function as well as mood and well-being [60]. Newman, [61] found that individuals who regularly engaged in journaling experienced fewer doctor visits over six months and reported reduced symptoms of chronic conditions such as asthma and arthritis. These findings underscore the potential of expressive writing as a low-cost, accessible, and evidence-based intervention in grief therapy.

### **Hypnotherapy & Breathwork**

Grief is an emotional reaction to any loss. Coping with grief is accompanied by many unbearable depressive thoughts including suicidal ones. Many people use alcohol or substances to alleviate the painful symptoms of grief [62]. In these challenging situations, hypnotherapy emerged as an effective modality for managing grief, navigating feelings, and facilitating healing. Hypnotherapy is an adjunctive intervention that involves guiding individuals into a state of deep relaxation and focused attention, allowing access and communication to the subconscious mind. Communication is developed either directly or indirectly by using metaphors with a state of alternative consciousness [63]. This therapeutic technique can be particularly beneficial for those experiencing grief in several ways. Hypnotherapy can help individuals process complex emotions associated with loss, such as sadness, guilt, or anger, by accessing and addressing these feelings at a subconscious level. By addressing unresolved emotions and building inner resources, hypnosis can alleviate symptoms of anxiety and depression that

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often accompany grief. This therapy is used to treat grief-related issues in both adults and children [64]. While hypnotherapy is traditionally used in the treatment of addictive behaviors, its application in grief therapy especially among individuals with trauma histories or limited verbal processing abilities warrants further exploration.

Grief is a quite painful experience for an individual that has a massive impact on every aspect of that person's life. Breathwork is a powerful technique for treating grief symptoms. It encompasses a range of structured breathing techniques designed to regulate autonomic nervous system activity, promote emotional stability, and enhance psychological well-being [65]. Mindful breathing exercises have a direct impact on the brain by activating and generating the parasympathetic response. In these exercises, the participant engages in a seated or supine posture with eyes closed to initiate breath awareness. By focusing on the sensation of one's breath, the amygdala of the brain becomes calm, which is usually hyperactive in grief [66]. In the context of grief, conscious breathing techniques including the diaphragmatic breathing technique (4x4 breathing or box breathing) can help individuals access and release suppressed emotions, facilitating the grieving process. This technique allows the individual to relax his mind and regulate his heart rate by confronting the heavy emotions associated with grief [67]. In this technique, the person has to inhale for the count of four, then hold the breath for a count of four, followed by exhaling for the count of four, and then repeat the same process [68]. These practices like box breathing can activate the body's relaxation response, reducing stress and promoting a sense of calm during times of grief. Daily engagement in breathwork exercises can assist the individual in getting rid of the continuous painful cycle of stress that drains the nervous system, thus making the person feel more relieved and grounded [69].

### **Art and Music Therapy**

Art and music therapy have recently emerged as a burgeoning area of interest for helping individuals navigate the complex emotional terrain of grief. These creative therapies offer non-verbal alternative avenues for emotional articulation and psychological healing, especially when verbal communication is inadequate [70]. Art therapies facilitate healing and personal growth during the bereavement process. With the help of art, the individual may externalize emotional states through visual creation. This therapy method employs creative processes such as drawing, sketches, painting, or sculpting to help individuals express and process their emotions [71]. By engaging in art, this therapy allows the individuals to externalize their feelings that may be difficult to articulate verbally. Art therapy provides a tangible form to their inner experiences. This externalization can serve as a refuge and a container for overwhelming emotions like anger, fear, and anxiety, offering comfort during the grieving process [72]. Art therapists are specially trained to assess clients' artwork. By assessing their artwork, they provide valuable insights related to their emotions and thus guide those individuals through their grief journey [73]. Loumeau-May, [74] reported that many art therapies can help

children to recover from a traumatic loss like losing parents, or a sibling. Weiskittle & Gramling [75], reported in their studies that creating visual art as a mean of therapeutic method can help adult individuals in developing the coping skills required for managing their grief properly. It allows them to make sense of their loss and look for new ways to preserve the legacy of their loved ones.

Music is an effective tool influencing the individual's health and community well-being. Music was initially suggested as a treatment for various illnesses by Greeks and Egyptians [76]. Music can evoke memories and provide comfort by releasing emotions, thereby aiding in the healing process. One of the cultures known as shamanic culture uses music to reduce the symptoms of illness and help the dying and bereaved [77]. The main elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, form, texture, and dynamics address the basic sensory needs of humans. Amidst the unforeseeable consequences of grief, music can give comfort, alleviate distress, provide necessary coping tools, and foster coping experiences [78].

Music therapy utilizes various musical interventions to address the emotional, cognitive, and social needs of the individuals. Music therapy facilitates emotional expression with the help of music. It provides comfort and promotes a sense of connection [79]. Listening to the selective songs that remind the person of his lost loved one can help him acknowledge the reality of the loss [80]. Moreover, journaling after listening to a song can be a therapeutic exercise that deepens the emotional connection of the individual with music. Writing helps process the feelings of grief by promoting mental clarity and emotional well-being. Additionally, documenting the reflections over time can help the individual reveal patterns in his emotions, helping him track his moods and personal growth [81].

Many previous studies have demonstrated that specific music therapy interventions for example songwriting, composing, and improvisation help support positive growth and processing of grief [82]. These activities can help individuals express suppressed emotions thereby leading to emotional release and healing. Additionally, music therapy can elicit positive changes in mood and help synthesize physical, sensory, and emotional responses contributing to the overall well-being of the bereaved individual [83].

### **Writing a Letter to the Deceased:**

The death of a loved one often represents one of the most emotionally distressing experiences an individual can face. Grief in such cases is frequently accompanied by a profound sense of emotional incompleteness, characterized by unsaid words, unresolved emotions, and a perceived void that may feel irreplaceable. In this context, writing a letter to the deceased has emerged as a powerful therapeutic strategy, enabling individuals to process grief, express emotions, and foster a continuing psychological bond with the departed [84]. This exercise offers a private and personal avenue to articulate thoughts and feelings that may be challenging to share elsewhere. Crafting a letter enables

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the release of pent-up emotions that may have been lingering in a person's mind, thereby facilitating the processing of grief. This act of writing can help unburden the mind and heart, providing relief from lingering feelings [85]. Moreover, after addressing the deceased directly in a letter, the individual can foster a continued unique bond, and get comfort and a feeling of closeness despite their physical absence [86].

Timing plays a critical role in the effectiveness of this intervention. It is generally not recommended to engage in such deep emotional exercises immediately following the loss. Instead, it is advisable to begin once the acute shock of bereavement has begun to settle, often after one or two weeks, allowing the individual to approach the process from a more emotionally prepared and reflective state [87]. As grief often follows a nonlinear and episodic trajectory, the initiation of letter writing should be aligned with the individual's emotional readiness [87]. While writing the letter, it is recommended to choose a quiet, and comfortable space free from distractions to facilitate open expression [84]. One should be honest with his feelings, and express them whether they involve love, regret, gratitude, or even unresolved issues. The person can reflect on cherished memories or inform his loved one about recent events in your life. After writing the letter, the person needs to decide what feels right for him, either keep the letter, read it aloud, share it with someone he trusts, or partake in a symbolic act like burning or burying it to signify emotional release [88].

### **Exercise**

Grief is a natural emotional response to loss, and managing it effectively is crucial for the mental and physical well-being of every human. Like many other methods, exercise can serve as a powerful coping mechanism for grief by promoting emotional resilience and reducing stress [89]. Engaging in physical activities like walking, jogging, or strength training helps release a body hormone known as endorphins which are responsible for improving mood and reducing anxiety (Schilling). Exercise also provides a healthy distraction, giving individuals to get outside the bubble of sadness and provides a structured way to process their emotions. Additionally, exercise enhances sleep quality as bereaved individuals often struggle with sleep. Moreover, exercise boosts energy levels, and prevents feelings of isolation by encouraging social interaction in group fitness settings [90]. If a person incorporates moderate exercise into daily routines, it will consequently create a sense of control and stability during difficult times. Whether through solo workouts or group activities, regular physical activity fosters healing and supports emotional well-being during the grieving process [91].

Furthermore, yoga is another powerful tool for managing grief. It helps the person get rid of many undesired physical and psychological impacts of grief on the body including insomnia, loss of concentration, poor memory, and difficulty in handling emotions. By reducing physical stress and promoting relaxation in the body, yoga supports the overall good health of the individual [92].

### **Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**

Each individual's grief journey is unique. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is an evidence-based approach that provides a short-term, structured, coping framework that helps individuals struggling with grief. The word "Cognitive" has come from the Latin term, "Cognoscere" which means "to recognize, to know, to conceptualize". This therapy recognizes and changes all the distressing beliefs of an individual [93]. CBT addresses maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors associated with grief [94]. It helps individuals reframe negative thoughts, and manage their emotions by engaging in meaningful activities and social interaction to prevent isolation and withdrawal. It plays a crucial role in managing grief by promoting adjustment after loss, especially when it leads to prolonged distress or dysfunctional coping. CBT helps individuals identify and challenge negative thought patterns associated with loss, thereby promoting healthier coping mechanisms. It helps individuals recognize irrational or self-defeating thoughts, such as guilt, blame, or hopelessness, that may prolong grief [42].

CBT is a problem-oriented therapy that focuses on the current problems of the client and finding solutions for them. Before each session, the progress from the previous session is evaluated, and a different intervention specific to the client's problem is applied. The current topic of discussion is briefly introduced to the client [95]. The therapist provides a safe environment and meets his client with true compassion. Based on the principle of collaborative empiricism, the therapist uses a collaborative approach to solve the client's problems [96]. Due to the specific adjustments in the interventions, CBT can be described as a more individualized type of treatment [97]. Therapists guide individuals in reframing distressing thoughts into more balanced and constructive perspectives. CBT integrates mindfulness practices to help individuals regulate emotions and cope with distressing thoughts [98]. Gradual exposure to grief-related memories or reminders can reduce avoidance behaviors and help in emotional processing. Individuals learn strategies to manage grief-related challenges, such as adjusting to life changes and handling emotional triggers [99].

### **The Role of Social Media and AI in Grief Management** **Social media's role in coping with loss**

Technology has become an important part of human daily life, and it has transformed the whole perception of grieving publicly. With the rise of digital communication, social media has become an important space for expressing grief, memorializing loved ones, and seeking support. Digital mourning is becoming more common as the individuals who grew up using social media are now adults. Social media provides a platform for connecting people across vast distances. Different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide necessary tools where users can share memories, engage with virtual support groups and communities, and participate in online memorialization [100]. Digital memorials allow continued engagement with the deceased by extending help in the grieving process beyond physical spaces [101]. People use different online platforms to find a suitable

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online therapist rather than going to a session in person. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, teletherapy and online grief counseling gained widespread acceptance, particularly as in-person services became restricted [102]. Grief can make the sufferer very isolated, but the online communities provide a sense of belonging, where the individual can share their experiences, and find solace and comfort. In social media, anyone can create digital memorials of their loved ones and pay tribute to those who are no more with them. Digital memorials serve as enduring repositories for photos, stories, and tributes, facilitating ongoing bonds with the deceased and extending grieving rituals beyond traditional physical settings [103].

However, the evolving nature of online grief also presents new ethical and psychological challenges, such as managing memorial pages after death, navigating unsolicited reminders, and determining digital legacy.

### AI in Grief Therapy: Help or Hurdle?

Artificial intelligence (AI) has successfully replaced humans in many physical activities and now has entered the lives of humans in the forms of chatbots, robots, efficient vacuum cleaners to their very own personal assistants including Apple, Siri, and Google Assistant [104]. Artificial intelligence is also playing a growing role in grief management. AI-driven chatbots, such as grief-support bots, offer emotional assistance by simulating conversations, helping individuals process their loss in a structured manner. These technologies offer 24/7 availability, anonymity, and personalized responses, making them accessible to those who may hesitate to seek traditional therapy [105]. Additionally, AI-enhanced algorithms can analyze social media activity to detect grief-related distress and suggest supportive interventions. AI tools can analyze speech and text to detect emotional distress, offering immediate coping strategies and referrals to human therapists when needed [106]. However, AI lacks human empathy and deep emotional understanding, which are crucial in grief counseling. While it can supplement human-led therapy, it cannot replace the personal touch and nuanced emotional support that professional counselors or close family and friends provide [107]. Moreover, ethical considerations regarding digital immortality and data privacy also remain areas of concern [108].

Many people process grief by using artificial intelligence-based reanimated models of their deceased loved ones [109]. With advancements in AI and Natural Language Processing (NLP), the exact voice of the deceased person can be generated, allowing the bereaved individuals to talk with their lost loved ones. While this may sound conceptually appealing to certain users, it raises many legal and ethical concerns regarding the misrepresentation of the dead. This also raises questions about whether these types of technologies help or obstruct the normal grieving process. Some individuals might get delusional and addicted to these kinds of activities as they provide only a temporary false hope.

### Conclusion

Grief is a complex and multidimensional experience. While grief may never fully disappear, learning to process and manage

it enables the person to rebuild his life with resilience and hope. By understanding the various aspects of grief, each individual can find ways to navigate his unique grieving process. Effective grief management strategies including journaling, art and music therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness-based interventions, and support groups can provide valuable support for those struggling with loss. Seeking professional help, and staying connected with supportive communities can also help in the healing process. Furthermore, an integrative approach to grief research and intervention can lead to more effective therapeutic and community-based support for the bereaved. Ultimately, grief is not about forgetting but about finding a way to move forward while cherishing the memories of those we have lost.

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