

PATHWAYS CENTER *for* GRIEF & LOSS

10 REASONS WHY THE SECOND YEAR OF GRIEF CAN BE THE WORST

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We often hear that the second year of grief is the worst, but is that just another grief myth, or is there some truth in it?

Grieving is different for everyone, and it can take a longer or a shorter time depending on the type of loss, and your own personality. For some, after a major loss, like the loss of a spouse or a child, the second year can certainly be tougher for a variety of reasons. This does not mean that the second year will be harder for you. This could depend on your own resilience and also the amount of support that you have.

Here we have explored 10 reasons why the second year might be worse, but please realize that it could be quite different for you.

1. Shock and disbelief have worn off, and reality kicks in. You start to realize that your loss is real and that this change in your life is forever.
2. Friends and family may presume that you are over your grief so you get less support and understanding.
3. You realize in the second year that your expectation that things will suddenly get better one day are not true. There is no linear recovery timeline, or stages that you should have worked through by now. Grief is an up and down messy roller coaster of emotions. You come to the realization that there is no endpoint. Grief is with you for life. How you deal with it is the difference in how you will live your life from now on.
4. The second year of grief may be the time when you begin to question who you are now. No longer the wife or the mother, the husband or the father, the daughter or the son. Self-identity can be a huge challenge as we come to terms with the new parameters of our lives.
5. Now might be the time when you are having to adapt to being the only breadwinner and facing sorting our finances. Loss of financial security might be a difficult secondary loss for you.
6. You may start to think about whether or not you need to move house to downsize or because a change might be good for you at this stage. Sometimes the loss of a home can compound feelings of grief.

7. The realization is sinking in that your dreams for your future life have changed and it can be hard to re-calibrate and work out what you now want to do with the rest of your life. Making decisions can be one of the hardest things when you are grieving, but in the second year you feel more pressure to make these decisions and move on.
8. You may have isolated yourself and kept away from your usual social life during the first year, and trying to re-connect with friends can be hard. You have changed a lot and may feel the need to make new friends with people who understand the person you have now become.
9. There is a disappointment when you realize that it still isn't over. People often ask "shouldn't I be over this by now?" Well, it isn't ever really over. Bursts of grief can hit at any time even years later, but we do gradually learn to cope with them.
10. Often the second year is the hardest as that's when the real grief work might begin. This is the time when you may be ready to face your grief head on and deal with any issues that are holding you back. If you're not ready yet though, don't feel guilty. There is no deadline and everyone grieves in their own time. You will know when the time is right for you to take the next step.

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