

## Take Care of Yourself

Grief is hard work. Caregivers sometimes report feeling numb and unable to carry on with regular responsibilities. This is normal. You need rest, plenty of water, and good food to have the strength to get through it. Check in with your healthcare provider and get help if your grief and exhaustion feel like too much to bear. Caregiving and grieving can be a long journey. Take time – even small moments – to pause, breathe, and notice the world around you.

Do things that make you feel well, such as exercise, hobbies, music. Avoid unhealthy ways of dealing with your feelings to prevent added problems. No single answer will work for everyone but there is a lot you can do.

Remember:

- ▶ Grief is a natural reaction to loss.
- ▶ Your grief is personal to you.
- ▶ Grief is an expected and important part of life, even though it is painful. Grief reminds us that we have loved, and that is something to cherish.



## WE CARE

Remember that grief is a normal part of life and that we all grieve differently. There are things you can do to support yourself while grieving. For further support on your grief journey, please call the Care2Caregivers Helpline for free, confidential assistance. When you care, and when you grieve, we are there.



WHEN YOU CARE • WE ARE THERE

### For more information:

Comprehensive Services on Aging (COPSA) has been providing compassionate and sensitive mental health care to the elderly since 1975. A team of Geriatric Psychiatrists, Social Workers and Case Managers are available to assist families with diagnosis and treatment. COPSA also provides training for professionals, family caregivers and the community on issues related to aging, memory and mental health. Care2Caregivers provides resources, referrals, information and supportive counseling to anyone caring for someone with memory loss. Call for help.

**HELPLINE: 800.424.2494**  
**[www.Care2Caregivers.com](http://www.Care2Caregivers.com)**

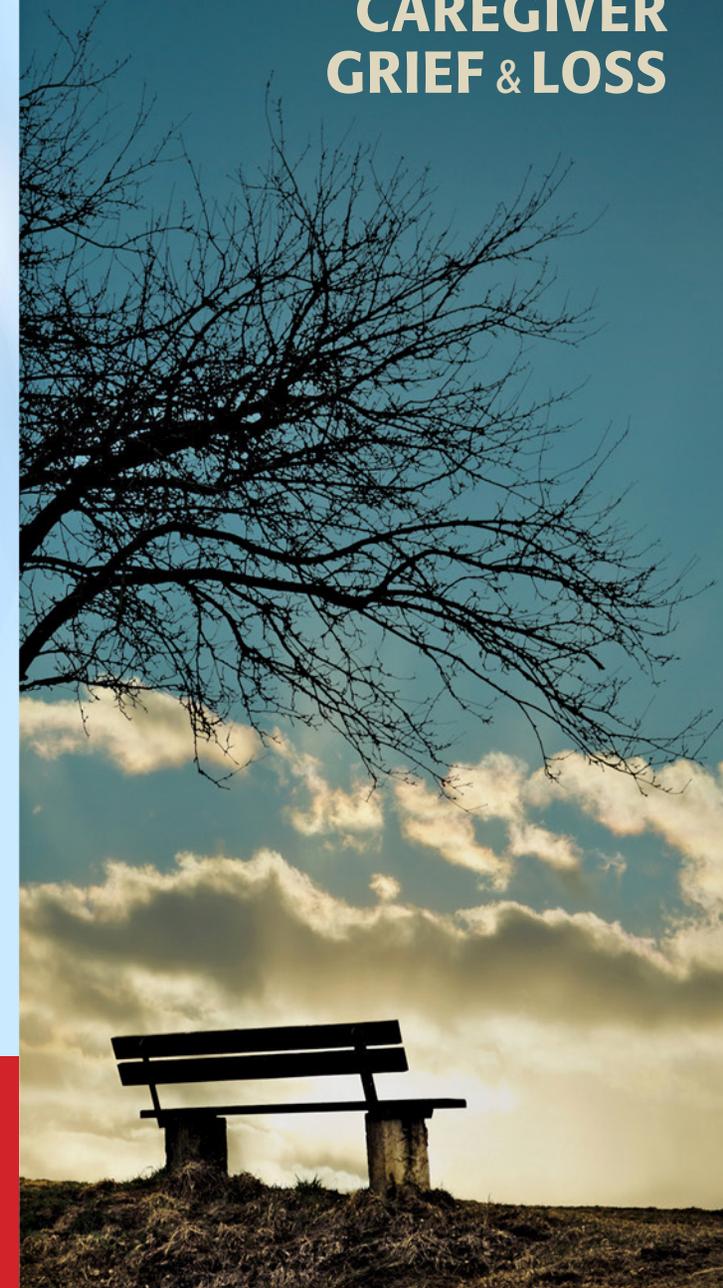
# RUTGERS HEALTH

University Behavioral Health Care  
COPSA Institute for Alzheimer's Disease & Related Disorders

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## UNDERSTANDING CAREGIVER GRIEF & LOSS



## Caregivers inevitably deal with grief and loss as they fulfill their caregiver responsibilities.

Understanding the grief process can help you gain meaning, which can have a positive effect on your life. Grief is a normal part of life that we all experience.



### LOSS

is the experience of being deprived of someone or something of value.

### GRIEF

is a deep sorrow that we feel when we have experienced a loss.

We grieve when someone close to us dies. We also grieve when we lose a job, a relationship, a home, our health, our planned retirement, or our role in the family. We feel grief after losing a loved one or experiencing another change in our lives. Grief also can occur before a loss, such as when we learn that a loved one has a terminal illness. We call this **anticipatory grief**.

For many people, grief is a strong emotion that can be overwhelming. **Grief can be a complicated mix of feelings, like anger, guilt, relief, anxiety, sadness, and despair.** It's normal to feel so many different things. Sadness is a natural reaction to loss, but so are these other reactions. Talking to others can help you understand and resolve issues that may be causing significant emotional pain.

800.424.2494

www.COPSAInstitute.com



### One loss reminds us of other losses.

Memories add to current feelings, making them more intense. For people who have lived a long life, and experienced many losses, a new loss can feel like an unbearable burden.

### Each person's grief journey is unique.

Even though many family members may experience the loss of a loved one, they may each grieve in their own way, in their own time. Avoid comparing your feelings and reaction to others, even those in your own family.

If you are uncertain about whether your reactions or grieving process is normal, **contact a trusted friend, family member, or professional.** Outside help can help you adjust and regain your own personal well-being.

## What do I do with my grief?

### Start by acknowledging your feelings.

Remind yourself that whatever you feel is valid. Take moments when you can to experience your grief; do not bury it. There is no predictable timeline for grieving. For most people, losing someone dear leaves a big hole that is never filled. Over time, it becomes easier to live with the loss, but the sense of grief may never fully disappear.

### Recognize that caregivers for someone with memory loss may live through at least two periods of grief.

The first is due to losing the person through the memory loss and the changes that result, as the person's memory, personality, and abilities decline. This is called **ambiguous loss**, as we are grieving the loss of who the person used to be, although the person is still alive. The second grief is the loss of the person through death.

### Find safe places and people so you can talk about what you're going through.

Identify who might be able to help, to listen, or just to keep you company. Consider who to avoid, if you find them unhelpful. Family and friends can be a big support, especially if they share your loss. Support groups can be a comfort. People recover by gathering and mourning with others. You can do this virtually, if you cannot do it in person. Talk about the person you have lost. **Tell stories about what you remember, about why you cared, and about what you miss.**

