



# Grief and serious illness: Support for caregivers

## Understanding grief

Grief can begin long before someone dies. When the person you are caring for is diagnosed, becomes more ill, or undergoes treatments, you may experience different forms of grief throughout the process over time. You may grieve the loss of health or independence of the person you care for.

You may also grieve changes to your relationships or future plans. These losses can bring many emotions and physical responses, such as sadness, anger, fatigue, or loss of appetite. These reactions are normal and may come and go.



## How palliative care can help

Palliative care is not only for people at the end of life. It focuses on improving quality of life at any stage of illness. It supports people living with serious illness and the family members, friends or others who care for them. Support can begin at diagnosis and continue through illness and after death. A care team, including a family doctor, nurse, or other community supports, can explain how to access palliative care.

### Care teams can:

- Listen and support you
- Help you talk about what matters most
- Support your emotional, spiritual, and practical needs
- Help you navigate care
- Connect you to community resources or online support

## Taking care of yourself

Caring for someone with serious illness can take a lot of energy and be emotionally, mentally and physically demanding. Looking after yourself can help you adjust and continue supporting the person you are caring for.

### Ways to support yourself:

- Trust that the grief you feel is real
- Give yourself time to process your thoughts and feelings
- Connect with others who understand what you are going through, such as a peer support group, online community, or someone you feel comfortable talking to
- Make time for things that bring you peace and comfort
- Ask for and accept help from people who care whenever you can

Care teams and trusted community leaders can connect you with available local or online grief support resources. These may include community groups, counsellors, or cultural supports.

[Canada.ca/palliative-care](https://Canada.ca/palliative-care)

[AboutGrief.ca](https://AboutGrief.ca)