

There is no exact timeline for grief counseling. Some people may start to feel better after just a few sessions, while others may take months or longer to feel relief. Some specific approaches, including some types of CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy) may involve a set number of sessions, or therapy may be open-ended until the patient determines they are ready to wrap up. Just as there is no right or wrong way to grieve, there is no right or wrong way to seek therapy for grief.

Many people mistakenly believe that their grief needs to be debilitating or all-encompassing to warrant therapy. This is not the case. While people who experience severe, prolonged grief—particularly those who are considering self-harm or engaging in unhealthy substance use—are especially likely to benefit from therapy, so too are people whose grief is less intense but still interfering with well-being or daily functioning. In practice, almost anyone struggling to process a loss could benefit from grief counseling.

Oftentimes, yes. Grief is a near-universal part of being human, and many find that their grief, while profound, does not stop them from participating in day-to-day life and steadily eases over time without outside help. For others, however, the harsh pain of early grief persists for months or years or leaves them unable to function. This group is especially likely to benefit from seeing a therapist, who can guide them through their grief and help them reconnect with the world.

Because grief does not in itself necessitate therapy, untreated grief will often resolve on its own. However, for some people—particularly those who would qualify for a diagnosis of prolonged grief disorder—untreated grief can be a source of seemingly endless pain or lead them to withdraw from the world. In such cases, treatment can be indispensable, as it can help an individual adapt to the loss and start living again.

