

Understanding Grief with Claire Willis,
co-author of *Opening to Grief: Finding Your Way from Loss to Peace*

1. Nearly all of us will grieve. We lose people and beings and experiences we hold dear, because nothing we love lasts forever. Grieving is part of the human condition.

2. We are in the midst of a pandemic that we have never before experienced and has shaken us to the bones. Our losses are staggering. Deaths have surpassed those from the last five wars combined. Many of us are feeling a mix of emotions, including anxiety, despair, sadness, and anger. We might not recognize all these feelings and sensations as grief — but we are grieving. This is how human beings respond to loss.

3. Grieving is one of the most difficult experiences that most of us ever face. Grief's terrain is unspeakably painful. There's no end run around grief. There are no easy answers and there's no one way to grieve. Your grief is yours alone. The good news is you will find your way.

4. The best way to begin is by being kind to your self. Start where you are and try not to judge yourself. Tend with care to all your feelings, in the same way you would comfort a friend or a child who is hurting. Listen to your body, and let it tell you what it needs.

5. When you are ready, consider what might offer you courage and solace. For many people, spending time in nature is restorative. Others discover mindfulness and meditation. Many of us heal in community.

6. Grief isn't only pain and sadness. When you are ready, you may discover that being with grief is a way of transforming suffering. Most people laugh again, even amidst tears. They find purpose, go on, and find ways of bringing their loved ones with them. Grief and love are intertwined. By acting generously and connecting with others, many people live fully again.