

Loss and Grief After Domestic/ Family Violence

Grief and loss following the death of a loved one is perceived by society as a normal and healthy process. Grief and loss after experiencing domestic/family violence is still a stigmatised topic and is not often acknowledged.



WARNING: SOME OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS FACT SHEET MAY BE DIFFICULT TO READ. PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME AND FIND ASSISTANCE IF YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO.

If you decide to end an abusive relationship, the losses that you may experience are very real, and could include the loss of:

- Your sense of safety and security
- Your trust in the world around you
- Your sense of personal identity and self-worth
- Your physical and emotional health
- Your possessions
- Your job and/or means of supporting yourself
- Your family, friends and community
- Your dreams for a meaningful relationship and for the future

You may have left your familiar environment and had to move to another town or state. It is important to understand that the loss of what has been left behind is enormous and the grief in processing your situation can be exhausting and take time.

There is a lot of information about the process and stages of grief, and they can be broken down into three phases:

Phase 1 / Reception

This is the initial impact and may come with feelings of intense shock, numbness, unreality, and disbelief.

Phase 2 / Recognition

This is a transition phase that involves recognising what has happened, a period of mourning, disorganisation, and adjustment. This may leave you with feelings of anger, loss, depression, lack of confidence and intense waves of emotional feelings that are often unexpected and uncontrollable.

Phase 3 / Reinvestment

This stage is a time of reorganisation and recovery where you begin implementing changes and building a new way of life.

It is important that you know and understand what is happening for you and that your feelings are normal and very real. If you have recently left an abusive relationship, often it is the practical aspects of life that you focus on, however it is important not to overlook your emotional needs.

Like grief following a loved one's death, these three phases do not always follow a set pattern; they are often fluid and overlapping. The emotions and feelings associated with everything that has happened may at times be positive and give you the energy you need to move you forward, but at other times they might pull you down. Talking with a trusted, safe and non-judgemental person about your feelings can help you to make sense of what is or has been happening, and it can help you to make sense of your world. A domestic and family violence counselling service, such as Yemaya, can help you to do this.

Further Information

Yemaya Women's Support Service

P: (03) 6334 0305

E: admin@yemaya.com.au

Please note that all information contained within this fact sheet is to be used as a guide only. If you require further information or assistance please contact Yemaya Women's Support Service.

