

How Did GRIEF Get an Expiration Date?

Certain things need an expiration date. Milk, eggs, mayonnaise, meat, and fish... there is a time we need to be done with them, and throw them away... I get all that. But does grief have an expiration date?

For some reason, there seems to be an acceptable shelf life—6-12 months—and then grief should be off the shelf, out of the home and permanently removed with the weekly trash service.

If it was only that simple Right well guess what:

The “grief expiration date” myth must come from people who have never experienced a close death – otherwise they would know the truth. Everyone fears facing such a loss. They are hopeful that should death touch their world, it will only take 6-12 months to recover. No one wants someone they love to die. So, until faced with the reality, it’s easier to think ‘this won’t happen to me, AND if it does it will only be bad for a finite, short amount of time and then...there’s an expiration date and it is magically all gone.’ What a wonderful world that would be.

We have heard time and time again there is a societal expectation to “get over” grief in 6 months, and at the longest, a year. Those who aren’t grieving believe it, and often those who are also believe it - this sets grieving people up for false, and ultimately disappointing, expectations.

The one year mark looms like some golden carrot over the heads of those who are grieving. It is a symbol of hope that if they make it to the one year mark they will be in a much happier and pain free place.

The reality is they won’t be over it, nor should they be. If someone spent years loving another person, the pain of that person’s death simply will not be removed due to a date on the calendar.

The opposite actually might happen – people who are grieving may feel even more pain in year two because the initial numbness, which often serves as a protective barrier at the onset of loss, has worn off and they begin experiencing the full intensity of their feelings and grief. This is accompanied by the realization that life with loss is their “new normal.”

Contact [SafeHavenForWidowed](http://SafeHavenForWidowed.org)

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If you allow yourself to believe there is an expiration date for grief, you will start to think you aren't doing well if you still miss your loved one 5, 10, 20, 40 years after the loss. In reality – it's normal. And it's okay.

Grief IS a life-long journey. An emotional handicap you get up, and live with everyday. It doesn't mean you can't lead a happy life, but it is a choice, and takes work.

The frequency and intensity of the grief rollercoaster and monster should lessen over time, but the reality is every now and then for the rest of your life, they will appear still when not expected. Everyone grieves at their own pace, and in their own way.

There is no one way to grieve, and no certain order, and no timeline.

There is definitely not an expiration date.

Grief will take on different forms in different people. Not everyone cries; others cry all the time. Some exercise a lot. Others talk about it a lot. Many seek counseling or join a support group, and enjoy the company of a good and understanding listener.

If a year after your loss, thinking of your loved one missing a special day or milestone in your life, makes you sad, puts you in a funk, or makes you cry, don't beat yourself up. Allow yourself the ability to grieve the loss of memories not created. As long as the frequency and intensity of grief eases—even if it is slowly over time—you are coping in positive ways.

Grieving in a healthy manner, taking steps to move forward, and rebuild your life with a new normal, doesn't mean you won't have those tough days or tough moments.

There is no expiration date. Grief never fully goes away.

That doesn't have to mean you can't and won't live a happy and productive life.

What it does mean is the love you shared with loved ones lost doesn't have an expiration date either.

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