

# What Is Grief?

## Anticipatory Grief

A Gentle Guide from The Good Grief Healing Center

### What is Anticipatory Grief?

Anticipatory grief is the emotional pain and mourning we experience before a loss actually occurs. It often arises when a loved one is facing a terminal illness, progressive condition, or any expected life-altering change.

This type of grief can be just as intense and complex as the grief that follows a loss. You may be grieving what's already changed—the loss of roles, routines, or the person as you once knew them even while they are still physically present.

### Common Feelings in Anticipatory Grief:

- Sadness and anxiety about the future
- Guilt for wanting relief from the suffering
- Anger at the situation or changes in your loved one
- Loneliness, even while still together
- Moments of joy or relief which can feel confusing

These emotions are normal. They do not make you ungrateful or disloyal. They are signs that you are loving deeply in a hard situation.

You're not just grieving the person—you may be grieving:

- The loss of shared dreams

## What Is Grief?

- The shift in roles (from spouse to caregiver, for example)
- Watching someones personality or body change

How to Cope with Anticipatory Grief:

- Talk about your feelings with a trusted person or journal
- Ask for help caregiving can be exhausting
- Create small rituals light a candle, share a story, sit in silence together
- Practice breathwork and grounding your nervous system needs support too

Reflection Prompt:

What do I need right now physically, emotionally, or spiritually as I walk through this?

You dont have to rush or fix this.

You just have to breathe and be here.

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