

## Risk Factors for Complicated Grief

The deep sadness that people feel after the death of a loved one is a universal experience. Grief can hang over people who've lost someone like a cloud, for weeks or months, before they are ready to accept their loss and move on.

But in some cases, the process of recovery from grief stalls. Sufferers are unable to move forward or resolve their feelings. Their sense of sadness deepens, and daily living is severely disrupted by their absorption in mourning.

Estimates are that **between 10 and 20 percent** of those who lose a loved one will experience an extended period of complicated bereavement. The risk factors for developing the disorder include:

- Experiencing more than one death within a short period of time
- Being highly dependent on the individual who passed away
- Deaths that are shocking, premature, and unexpected
- Witnessing the death, or suffering alongside the deceased person if they died following a protracted illness
- Previous history of mental illness, especially **depression and PTSD**
- Suffering from **a substance use disorder**

At any given time, about six in 10 Americans will have experienced the loss of a loved one. Eventually everyone will experience this form of trauma, which means complicated grief is likely to touch every family at some point.

When death occurs, family members should watch out for each other even as they mourn their lost loved ones, and if anyone shows signs of continuous and deepening grief they should be encouraged to seek help from a qualified mental health professional.