

Trauma is often confused with grief, although they are two very distinct entities, each with their own set of symptoms and treatments. Grief is the emotional response when something cherished is lost. It usually falls within the realm of normal experience. Trauma, on the other hand, is a physiological reaction to an event outside the scope of normal life events with the threat or perceived threat of loss of life or limb. This comparison can provide insight into the similarities and differences:

<b>GRIEF</b>	<b>TRAUMA</b>
Emotional response to a loss	Physiological response to abnormal event
Feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, and depression	Reactions of terror, hyperarousal, and anxiety
Heart-centered	Brain-centered
Thinking focused on loss for a time	Thinking impaired as events “trigger” unplanned responses
May move through process naturally	Usually needs treatment and support to move through trauma
Traditional support helps – looking for emotional connection in most cases	Traditional support may escalate the physiological and psychological reaction
Feels sense of loss	Feels alienated and alone
Experiences loss of intimacy	Experiences threat to safety
Healing comes with time and embracing memories of loss	Must re-experience safety and distance from threat before any healing begins

There is a difference between acute and chronic trauma. Acute trauma results from a single, threatening and overwhelming event, such as a natural disaster. Chronic trauma occurs when someone is exposed to repeated or consistent threat to life and limb, such as chronic physical or sexual abuse. Trauma support acknowledges the unexpected nature of the abnormal event, and helps to create a true, but less threatening story around the event. Traumatized individuals need help to balance the work of processing the event with the need to manage demands of everyday life.

Immediate support following a tragedy can significantly diminish the negative impact on the

individual. The way trusted adults around the young person respond personally to what has happened can help restore the sense of safety.

## Grief and Trauma

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