

# The True Definition *of* GRIEF

Brought to you by  
The Grief School



This book is dedicated to Donovan Blake and Austin Tyler.



Silhouette of Donovan,  
Erica's son.

Donovan and Austin, I will carry both of you in my heart forever and I think about you every single day. You are the motivation I need to put my story out there to help everyone I can who is broken and hurting. I don't know why I was chosen for this journey, but until I see my boys again, I will be doing the work I was chosen for and that is healing broken hearts.

I love you both so much,  
Mom

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## Thank you for your interest in Healing Starts with the Heart.

It is our honor to give this, griever's guide, to you as a personal gift.

If you have downloaded this book there is a high probability that your heart is broken from a recent loss of death or one of the other 45 plus known losses that can cause a grieving experience.

Do know that we are here for you and your family. Even though we do not know you personally. We do know what a broken heart feels like. And we know that it does not feel good.

This guide is equipped with amazing tips designed to help you the griever understand the definition of grief.

Remember understanding the definition of grief is only the beginning of your work! Completing what is broken in your heart is your next step.

If you have any questions, we are available to help you. Understand it is never too soon to get help for a broken heart. You can reach out to us at any time to set up a free mini session with either Sharon and or Erica over the phone, online or face-to-face.

We appreciate you taking the time to review our guide.

Sincerely,

*Sharon Brubaker, GS*

**Grief Specialist**

**Certified Life Coach**

*Erica Honore, GS*

**Grief Specialist**

# WEBSTER'S Definition of Grief

**noun /grēf/**

**noun**

1. deep sorrow, especially that caused by someone's death. "she was overcome with grief"

**synonyms**

sorrow,	heartbreak
misery	broken heartedness
sadness	heaviness of heart
anguish	woe
pain	desolation
distress	despondency
agony	dejection
torment	despair
affliction	angst,
suffering	mortification
heartache	

# How your brain processes grief

## None of these worked

Be Strong

Just Give it Time

Grieve Alone

Replace the Loss

## Sharon's Experience with Grief

I didn't know what grief was or how to deal with it.

So, I did what I had seen everyone in my family do whenever we had experienced a loss.

I became very strong.

I had to be strong for my family to help them get through this.

I even grieved alone.

The very sad thing is I expected my children and husband to do the same when we were around Erica and Louis.

Just give it time I told my children.

This pain will go away in time.

So, we waited and waited, and nothing changed.

*Sharon*

# How your heart feels grief

## How I felt

I'm sad

I'm broken

I can't stop crying

I want to die

## Erica's Experience with Grief

The pain I felt after my losses occurred was so debilitating, I didn't think I could survive it.

I was so broken and sad.

I could not stop crying.

I didn't think there was anyone out there who could understand how bad I felt.

*Erica*

# THE TRUE Definition of Grief

## What grief is:

Grief is a normal part of our human experience here on earth

The grieving experience has a beginning middle and an end

- The onset of grieving occurs when the loss is first experienced.
- The middle of grieving can be characterized by an overwhelming and and seemingly insurmountable pain.
- The conclusion of the grieving process is reached when the necessary emotional work has been done, leading to healing and completion.

Grief is natural

Grief is a broken heart

Grief is unique to you

No one knows how you feel

Grief hurts

Grief is not intellectual

Your grief can never be compared to anyone

Grief cannot be escaped

You must go through grief

Grief is the price of your love

# Grief is not:

**Both Sharon and Erica agree that symptoms of grief will vary from person to person**

A mental illness

A pathological condition

Grief is not Linear

Grief is not 5 Stages

A problem to be solved

A sign of weakness

A task to be finished

A disease

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## Grief

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Grief has the ability to impact us physically, psychological and spiritually. A grieving experience is typically associated with the loss due to death. However, you can grieve the loss of anything significant to you.

Grief is associated with a long list of emotional and physical symptoms including but not limited to:

Shock	Feeling of guilt
Numbness	Regret
Sadness	Depression
Despair	Anxiety
Loneliness	Crying
Isolation	Headaches
Yearning	Weakness
Anger	Aches
Difficulty concentration	Pains
Forgetfulness	Worry
Irritability	Frustration
Increased or decreased appetite	Detachment
Increase in sexual urges	Isolation
Fatigue	Questioning of your faith
Sleeplessness	Asking yourself Why

## Grief is not just experienced when a death occurs:

There are many experiences that can cause a grieving experience in your heart. Death and divorce are just the most popular that everyone talks about.

### **This list includes some of the following:**

Death	Gaining a new family member (birth or adoption)
Divorce	Trouble with in-laws
Pet Lost	Childhood hurts, pains and losses
Marital Problems	Moving – leaving all your friends and family behind
Major Financial Changes	Birth of a non-typical child
Residual childhood pain	Miscarriage
Marital Separation'	Work – working more than 40 hours a week
Personal Injury	Sexual difficulties sexual identifying or confusion
Loss of Health	Change in school
Break-up of a Relationship	Violation of the law jail term of a family member or yourself
Ending a Drug or Alcohol Addiction	Serious health problems of a family member
Being Fired from Work	Stress can be unresolved grief
Having trouble in school	Outstanding personal achievement
Violation of the law jail term of a family member or yourself	Menopause
Puberty	Empty nest
Bullying at work or school Change in independence	End of a large project
Reconciliation with a mate	Loss of faith
Feeling that life is just not happy	Unresolved grief from the past
Child molestation, rape or loss of control of your body	Abortion
Retirement	Bankruptcy or Foreclosure
Change in weight	

# Questions

1. Were you surprised to find out that grief is not just from death?

2. Are there any losses from the list that you have experienced?

3. Did the list bring up any emotions for you? List them here.

## You may experience all or some of the following:

Loss of any of the following:

- Trust
- Safety
- Control
- Faith
- Fertility

Your emotions may be up and down ranging from unpredictable crying episodes to intense anger episodes

- Lack of focus
- A zombie like state (feeling as if in a fog)
- You may be overeating
- You may have no appetite at all
- You may feel like you cannot sleep
- You may feel like all you want to do is sleep
- Your emotions may be up and down ranging from unpredictable crying episodes to intense anger episodes
- Intense Anxiety
- Telling and retelling the story of your loved one and their death

# Everything You Feel Right Now is Normal!

After I was given the news that my boys had passed away, I was numb and in shock.

I often sat staring out at nothing all the while thinking how can this be my life?

How did this happen to me?

There wasn't anything anyone said to me in those moments that helped me or brought me comfort.

I was just sad and broken.

I felt like I was just gliding in and out of consciousness hardly registering what was going on around me.

Eventually the extreme numbness started to fade, and I became more and more aware of what was happening around me, but none of it really mattered.

All that mattered was that I was sad, I felt like I was going to die, and I didn't think the pain would ever go away.

I know now that everything I felt in those days and weeks following the tragic deaths of my boys was totally normal.

Grievors already know how to grieve because grieving is natural. Unfortunately, we're not told this because we're not equipped to talk about grief.

As a society, we're not given the right words. Instead we're told very unhelpful things like "You need to be strong" and "They're in a better place." In my honest opinion, the best place for my boys is with me! It's okay to feel everything your feeling right now in this moment.

It's okay to sit and stare off into space.

It's okay to cry uncontrollably for as long as you need.

It's okay to be angry and to want to yell.

It's okay to not want to get out of bed.

But after you do all of those things it's time to do some work to help you move beyond the pain.

"Just give it time," is not the advice you need right now.

Time alone will not heal your pain but taking a series of action steps within a period of time will help to mend your broken heart.

I'm speaking from experience and from my heart.

I would not be where I am today had I not made the correct choices that lead me to start picking up the pieces of my life and working my way back to a life that's worth living.

*Erica*

# WHEN IS IT TIME TO Begin Healing?

When my heart was broken from the loss of my nephew Austin, I could not imagine ever feeling better.

I remember thinking "will this pain ever go away?"

I would often go into the shower and just cry because I did not want my children to see me in tears.

I thought that I would be in this pain for the rest of my life.

Now looking back at that time in my life I remember some of the things that were told to me by close friends and family.

It breaks my heart to think of the large amount of misinformation out in the world.

For the most part loved ones around you want you to feel better. They want you to feel better right away.

So, inevitably they will say things like, "Keep Busy" you will feel better in time.

I did take this advice at first. Unfortunately, I never felt better.

There was just this pain and sadness.

My doctor told me while on a visit that it would take time before I start to feel better.

I trusted him. And then I waited, and waited, but this pain did not go away or start to ease up. I now know that the above statements are some of the lies of grief or misinformation that we hear from family and friends when they are trying to help.

I was able to complete my relationship with Austin 8 months after his death. The good news is that we do not have to wait to start the steps to healing from a loss.

Grief healing can begin almost immediately.

That doesn't mean griever will be happy the loss occurred, or they don't care about the loss.

It's simply means they can immediately act.

Griever want to talk about what happened and they want to talk about both the good and bad aspects of the relationship.

Almost every relationship ends with things we wish were different.

Those thoughts are the beginning on the road to healing.

If you're still wondering if it's too soon to begin to heal, answer these two questions:

If you fell and gashed your leg and blood was pouring out, would you immediately seek medical attention?

The obvious answer is yes.

If circumstances and events conspired to break your heart, would you seek attention immediately, or would you allow yourself to bleed to death emotionally?

Pick one!

We can give you the tools you need to address your grief, so you don't spend the rest of your life waiting to feel better.

*Sharon*

# WHAT IS healing?

Healing means although you will be forever changed by the event that has caused you to grieve you are still able to experience joy.

You have allowed yourself to work through your grief and you are now feeling human again and genuinely wanting to enjoy a future in spite of not having your loved one to enjoy it with.

Healing means you can sit and tell stories about your loved one and instead of those memories causing you pain they bring a smile to your face and make your heart full.

True healing means you have learned how to talk about grief and loss and how to communicate to those around you exactly what you need in order to feel supported.

Just because you're experiencing the peace and serenity that healing can bring there will still be times that you will get sad.

Anniversaries and birthdays will be bittersweet, and it's okay to be sad.

Healing is not easy and at times you may feel as though it is not possible but keep working and don't give up!

You're so brave for wanting this and for acknowledging that you still deserve to live a life without this pain.

True healing is ME!!!!!! I am not here to feed you a song and dance about how amazing your life can be.

I am living my best life.

I have taken these steps, I have done this work and I am a better wife, a better mother and a better person because of it.

*Erica*

# Questions

4. What challenges are you struggling with at the moment?

5. Have you ever had a grief experience before?

6. Is this or other losses having an effect on other areas of your life?

# Questions

7. What effects is this having on your body?

8. Where will you be in five years from now if you change nothing at all?

9. Do you have the support you need to help you in your healing process?

# HOW TO TALK TO YOUR children about grief

## Do's

- Go first. As the adult, you are the leader and you need to set the tone and the pace for the conversation.
- Tell the truth about how you are feeling. Telling the truth about your own grief and about how you feel will establish trust and make your child feel safe with opening up about his or her own feelings.
- Recognize that grief is emotional, not intellectual and that sad or scared feelings are normal.
- Listen with your heart, not your head. Allow all emotions to be expressed without judgment, criticism, or analysis.
- Remember that each child is unique and has a unique relationship to the loss. It's okay for siblings to not share the same emotions or express themselves in the same manner.
- Be patient. Don't force your child to talk. Give your child time. Make sure to plant healthy ideas about talking about feelings.

## Don'ts

- Don't say "Don't Feel Scared." Fear is a common and normal response.
- Don't say "Don't Feel Sad." Sadness is a healthy and normal reaction. Sadness and fear, the two most common feelings attached to loss of any kind, are essential to being human.
- Don't ask your children how they are feeling. Like adults, fearful of being judged, they will automatically say, "I'm Fine," even though they are not.
- Don't act strong for your children. They will interpret your "non-feeling" as something they are supposed to copy.
- Don't compare their lives or situations to others in the world. Comparison always minimizes feelings.
- Don't make promises that you cannot keep. Instead of saying "Everything's going to be okay," say, "We'll do everything we can to be safe."
- Don't forget that your children are very smart. Treat them and their feelings with respect and dignity as you would like to be treated by others.

# GRIEVING while parenting

Telling your truth about your own grief will help to reassure your child that he or she is not alone and that it is acceptable to feel all types of emotions in response to loss.

- Be willing to let them see you sad
- Be willing to talk about the loss
- Be open to discussing the hard parts, honestly
- Be willing to maintain a genuine, warm, and supportive conversation
- Be willing to discuss grief as it changes and shifts in the days, weeks and years to come

Hiding your own grief and not allowing the expression of emotions like sadness and anger will do more harm than good. Denying your child, the ability to express themselves freely can lead to:

- Your Child Feeling Isolated- imagine how confusing it would be to think he or she is the only one expressing such pain and how isolating it would be to think the emotions they feel so strongly are unacceptable.
- It is beneficial for children to learn how to tolerate and cope with their emotions, as opposed to learning how to avoid them. Avoiding not only prohibits a person from fully engaging with the world, but it can contribute to psychological disorders like anxiety, depression and PTSD.
- Your child learning that emotions and memories should be feared  
When a child feels that certain emotions and emotional expressions are unacceptable or should be avoided, the message they receive is that these emotions are bad.

## **Make your love one a part of everyday family life**

Your loved one has died, but that doesn't mean that they aren't still an important part of you and your family. Continue to find ways to talk about your loved one and to make them a part of your life.

When Austin died, it was very important to Erica that we keep his memory alive for three-year-old Jordan. She encouraged everyone to tell stories about him regularly and she made it a tradition to continue to celebrate his birthday every year. They still do this to this day.

Remember that special days, hard days, milestones, and holidays may be especially difficult for your child, so it's important to have a plan for those days. Involve your children with developing the plan so that it will be meaningful for them as well.

Take space when you need it.

Trust your gut when considering how much emotion is too much for your child to witness from you. Although we encourage you to grieve openly, we do recognize that there is a point when this can lead to the child feeling responsible for the emotional well-being of the parent.

**Important:**

Parenting while grieving follows the same guidelines as applying an oxygen mask when on an airplane. You have to put the mask on yourself first, before you put the mask on your child. In order to encourage your child to heal you must go after what is broken in your heart as well.

## **Your child will learn how to handle their grief by watching you**

This type of learning can happen at any time in a person's life, but it is most common in childhood as kids learn to navigate the world by paying attention to the behavior of their peers and trusted adults

You may instinctively feel as though you should protect your child from negative emotions by masking your grief or by minimizing reminders of loved ones no longer here. However, this benefits no one. Think about it. After a child has experienced the death of someone they love, or even a beloved pet it is impossible to protect them from difficult emotions. Instead, it's important that parents show their children that while the emotions of grief can be extremely painful, they are acceptable, normal, and not to be feared.

# STATISTICS on death

Among external cause-of-injury deaths, unintentional poisoning has been the leading mechanism of injury mortality since 2011.

The difference in the infant mortality rate of 5.79 infant deaths per 1,000 live births in 2017 from 5.87 in 2016 was not statistically significant.

The 10 leading causes of infant death in 2017 remained the same as in 2016, although 4 causes changed ranks.

The age-adjusted death rate increased 0.4% in 2017

Life expectancy at birth was 78.6 years.

The 15 leading causes of death in 2017 were:

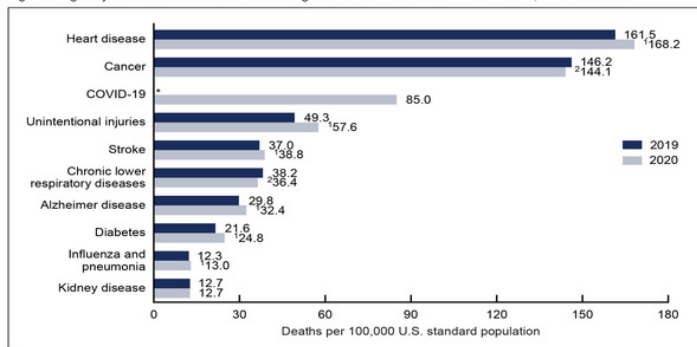
1. Diseases of heart (heart disease)
2. Malignant neoplasms (cancer)
3. Accidents (unintentional injuries)
4. Chronic lower respiratory diseases
5. Cerebrovascular diseases (stroke)
6. Alzheimer disease
7. Diabetes mellitus (diabetes)
8. Influenza and pneumonia
9. Nephritis, nephrotic syndrome and nephrosis (kidney disease)
10. Intentional self-harm (suicide)
11. Chronic liver disease and cirrhosis
12. Septicemia
13. Essential hypertension and hypertensive renal disease (hypertension)
14. Parkinson disease
15. Pneumonitis due to solids and liquids

### What are the death rates for the 10 leading causes of death?

In 2020, 9 of the 10 leading causes of death remained the same as in 2019. The top leading cause was heart disease, followed by cancer (Figure 4). COVID-19, newly added as a cause of death in 2020, became the 3rd leading cause of death. Of the remaining leading causes in 2020 (unintentional injuries, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, Alzheimer disease, diabetes, influenza and pneumonia, and kidney disease), 5 causes changed ranks from 2019. Unintentional injuries, the 3rd leading cause in 2019, became the 4th leading cause in 2020. Chronic lower respiratory diseases, the 4th leading cause in 2019, became the 6th. Alzheimer disease, the 6th leading cause in 2019, became the 7th. Diabetes, the 7th leading cause in 2019, became the 8th. Kidney disease, the 8th leading cause in 2019, became the 10th leading cause in 2020. Stroke, and influenza and pneumonia, remained the 5th and 9th leading causes, respectively (1). Suicide dropped from the list of 10 leading causes in 2020. Causes of death are ranked according to number of deaths (1). The 10 leading causes accounted for 74.1% of all deaths in the United States in 2020.

From 2019 to 2020, age-adjusted death rates increased for 6 of 10 leading causes of death and decreased for 2. The rate increased 4.1% for heart disease (from 161.5 in 2019 to 168.2 in 2020), 16.8% for unintentional injuries (49.3 to 57.6), 4.9% for stroke (37.0 to 38.8), 8.7% for Alzheimer disease (29.8 to 32.4), 14.8% for diabetes (21.6 to 24.8), and 5.7% for influenza and pneumonia (12.3 to 13.0). Rates decreased 1.4% for cancer (146.2 to 144.1) and 4.7% for chronic lower respiratory diseases (38.2 to 36.4). The rate for kidney disease remained unchanged.

Figure 4. Age-adjusted death rates for the 10 leading causes of death in 2020: United States, 2019 and 2020



\* COVID-19 became an official cause of death in 2020; rates for 2019 are not applicable.

<sup>†</sup> Statistically significant increase in age-adjusted death rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>‡</sup> Statistically significant decrease in age-adjusted death rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

NOTES: A total of 3,383,729 resident deaths were registered in the United States in 2020. The 10 leading causes of death accounted for 74.1% of all deaths in the United States in 2020. Causes of death are ranked according to number of deaths. Rankings for 2019 data are not shown. Data table for Figure 4 includes the number of deaths for leading causes and the percentage of total deaths. Access data table for Figure 4 at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db427-tables.pdf#4>

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

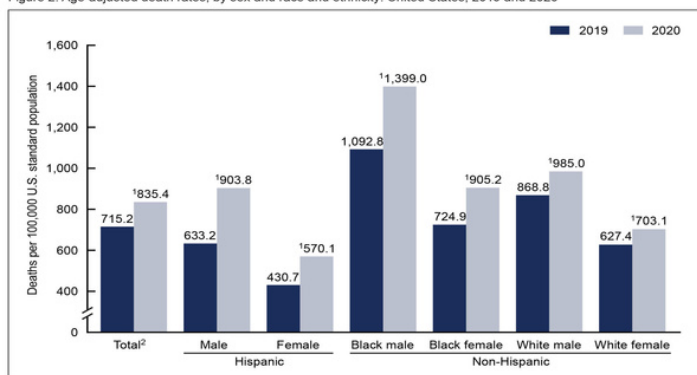
In 2020, the difference in life expectancy between females and males was 5.7 years, an increase of 0.6 year from 2019.

In 2020, life expectancy at age 65 for the total population was 18.5 years, a decrease of 1.1 years from 2019. For males, life expectancy at age 65 decreased 1.2 years from 18.2 in 2019 to 17.0 in 2020. For females, life expectancy at age 65 decreased 1.0 year from 20.8 in 2019 to 19.8 in 2020. The difference in life expectancy at age 65 between females and males increased 0.2 year, from 2.6 years in 2019 to 2.8 in 2020.

### What are the age-adjusted death rates for race-ethnicity-sex groups?

The age-adjusted death rate for the total population increased 16.8% from 715.2 per 100,000 standard population in 2019 to 835.4 in 2020 (Figure 2). Age-adjusted death rates increased in 2020 from 2019 for all race-ethnicity-sex groups, increasing 42.7% for Hispanic males, 32.4% for Hispanic females, 28.0% for non-Hispanic Black males, 24.9% for non-Hispanic Black females, 13.4% for non-Hispanic White males, and 12.1% for non-Hispanic White females.

Figure 2. Age-adjusted death rates, by sex and race and ethnicity: United States, 2019 and 2020



<sup>1</sup>Statistically significant increase in age-adjusted death rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>2</sup>Includes races and origins not shown separately.

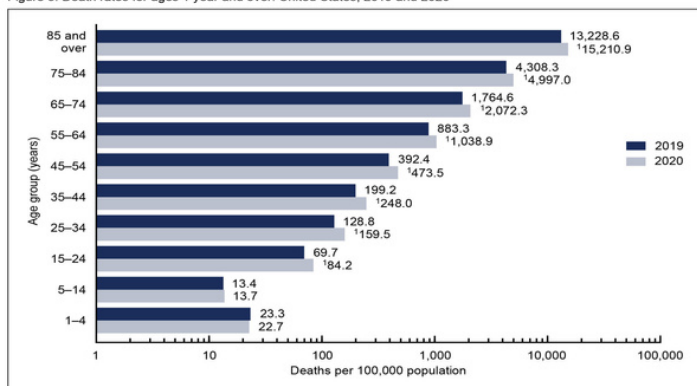
NOTES: Race groups are single race. Data table for Figure 2 includes the number of deaths. Access data table for Figure 2 at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databrief/db427-tables.pdf#62>.

SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

## Did age-specific death rates in 2020 change from 2019 for those aged 1 year and over?

From 2019 to 2020, death rates increased for each age group 15 years and over. Rates increased 20.8% for age group 15–24 (from 69.7 deaths per 100,000 population in 2019 to 84.2 in 2020), 23.8% for 25–34 (128.8 to 159.5), 24.5% for 35–44 (199.2 to 248.0), 20.7% for 45–54 (392.4 to 473.5), 17.6% for 55–64 (883.3 to 1,038.9), 17.4% for 65–74 (1,764.6 to 2,072.3), 16.0% for 75–84 (4,308.3 to 4,997.0), and 15.0% for 85 and over (13,228.6 to 15,210.9) (Figure 3). Rates for age groups 1–4 and 5–14 did not change significantly from 2019 to 2020.

Figure 3. Death rates for ages 1 year and over: United States, 2019 and 2020



<sup>1</sup>Statistically significant increase in age-specific death rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

NOTES: Rates are plotted on a logarithmic scale. Data table for Figure 3 includes the number of deaths. Access data table for Figure 3 at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db-427-tables.pdf#93>.

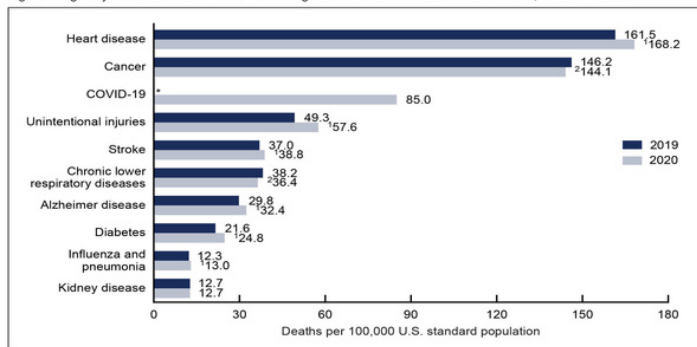
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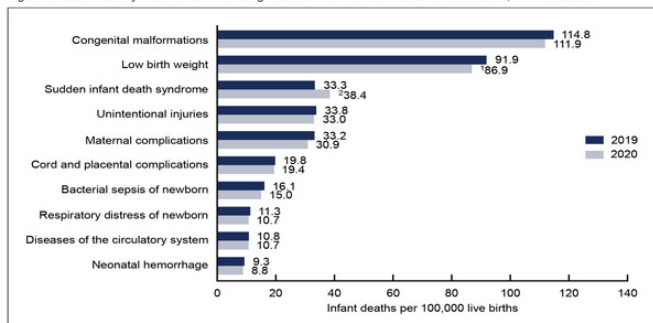
Data comparisons from 2019 to 2020 for COVID-19 are not applicable because COVID-19 was a new cause in 2020.

### What are the mortality rates for the 10 leading causes of infant death?

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is the ratio of infant deaths to live births in a given year. The IMR declined 2.9% from 558.3 infant deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 541.9 in 2020.

Causes of infant death are ranked according to number of infant deaths (1). The 10 leading causes of infant death in 2020 (congenital malformations, low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, unintentional injuries, maternal complications, cord and placental complications, bacterial sepsis of newborn, respiratory distress of newborn, diseases of the circulatory system, and neonatal hemorrhage) accounted for 67.5% of all infant deaths in the United States. Two of the leading causes of infant death exchanged ranks from 2019 to 2020 (Figure 5). Sudden infant death syndrome, the 4th leading cause in 2019, became the 3rd leading cause in 2020, while unintentional injuries, the 3rd leading cause in 2019, became the 4th leading cause in 2020. Necrotizing enterocolitis of newborn, the 10th leading cause in 2019, dropped from the list and was replaced by neonatal hemorrhage in 2020. The IMR for sudden infant death syndrome increased 15.3% from 33.3 in 2019 to 38.4 in 2020. The IMR for low birth weight decreased 5.4% from 91.9 in 2019 to 86.9 in 2020. Mortality rates for other leading causes of infant death did not change significantly.

Figure 5. Infant mortality rates for the 10 leading causes of infant death in 2020: United States, 2019 and 2020



<sup>1</sup>Statistically significant decrease in mortality rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

<sup>2</sup>Statistically significant increase in mortality rate from 2019 to 2020 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

NOTES: A total of 10,582 deaths occurred in children under age 1 year in the United States in 2020, with an infant mortality rate of 541.9 infant deaths per 100,000 live births. The 10 leading causes of infant death in 2020 accounted for 67.5% of all infant deaths in the United States. A total of 20,921 infant deaths occurred in 2019, with an infant mortality rate of 558.3 infant deaths per 100,000 live births. Causes of death are ranked according to number of deaths. Rankings for 2019 data are not shown. Data table for Figure 5 includes the number of deaths under age 1 year for leading causes of infant death and the percentage of total infant deaths. Access data table for Figure 5 at: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/data-briefs/db427-tables.pdf#95>. SOURCE: National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality.

## Summary

In 2020, a total of 3,383,729 resident deaths were registered in the United States—528,891 more deaths than in 2019. The number of deaths for which COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death was 350,831 (10.4% of the total number of deaths in 2020). From 2019 to 2020, the age-adjusted death rate for the total population increased 16.8%. This single-year increase is the largest since the first year that annual mortality data for the entire United States became available (2). The decrease in life expectancy for the total population of 1.8 years from 2019 to 2020 is the largest single-year decrease in more than 75 years (3). Age-specific death rates from 2019 to 2020 increased for each age group 15 years and over. Age-adjusted death rates increased in 2020 from 2019 for each race and ethnicity group for both males and females.

Of the 10 leading causes of death in 2020, 9 remained the same as in 2019, although 5 causes exchanged ranks. Heart disease was the leading cause followed by cancer. COVID-19, a new cause of death in 2020, was the third leading cause. Age-adjusted death rates increased for 6 leading causes and decreased for 2. Life expectancy at birth decreased 1.8 years from 78.8 years in 2019 to 77.0 in 2020, largely because of increases in mortality due to COVID-19, unintentional injuries, heart disease, homicide, and diabetes.

In 2020, a total of 19,582 deaths occurred in children under age 1 year, which was 1,339 fewer infant deaths than in 2019. The IMR decreased 2.9% from 558.3 infant deaths per 100,000 live births in 2019 to 541.9 in 2020. Among the 10 leading causes of infant death, the IMR increased for 1 cause (sudden infant death syndrome) and decreased for 1 (low birth weight).

Data and findings in this report are based on final mortality data and may differ from provisional data and findings previously published.

## Definitions

**Cause of death:** Based on medical information—including injury diagnoses and external causes of injury—entered on death certificates filed in the United States. This information is classified and coded in accordance with the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, 10th Revision (ICD-10)* (4).

**Death rates:** For 2020, based on population estimates for July 1, 2020, that are consistent with the April 1, 2010, census. These population estimates (as well as population figures for the 2010 census) are available on the CDC WONDER website (5). Age-adjusted death rates are useful when comparing different populations because they remove the potential bias that can occur when the populations being compared have different age structures. The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) uses the direct method of standardization; see Technical Notes of “Deaths: Final Data for 2019” (1) for more information.

**Infant mortality rate (IMR):** Computed by dividing the number of infant deaths in a calendar year by the number of live births registered for that same time period. IMR is the most widely used index for measuring the risk of dying during the first year of life.

**Leading causes of death:** Ranked according to the number of deaths assigned to rankable causes (6). COVID-19 was added to the list of rankable causes in 2020.

**Life expectancy:** The expected average number of years of life remaining at a given age. It is denoted by  $e_x$ , which means the average number of subsequent years of life for someone now aged  $x$ . Life expectancy estimates for 2020 are based on a methodology first implemented with 2008 final mortality data (7). Life expectancies for 2019 and 2020 are estimated using final Medicare data.

## Data source and methods

The data shown in this report reflect information collected by NCHS for 2019 and 2020 from death certificates filed in all 50 states and the District of Columbia and compiled into national data known as the National Vital Statistics System. Death rates shown in this report are calculated based on postcensal population estimates as of July 1, 2019, and July 1, 2020, which are consistent with the April 1, 2010, census. Differences between death rates were evaluated using a two-tailed  $z$  test.

The race and Hispanic-origin groups shown in this report follow the 1997 Office of Management and Budget standards and differ from the bridged-race categories shown in reports for data years prior to 2019 (1).

## About the authors

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**In the United States with an average of five grievers per death.  
(According to US Census Bureau)**

**2.5 million Grievors per year due to divorce.  
This does not include the children grieving this significant loss. (A compilation of US statistical agencies)**

**A study of 95,647 persons who lost a spouse found that the overall death rate for the surviving spouse doubled in the first week following the loss.**

# MEET THE SISTERS

## Sharon and Erica

THE Grief School & Healing starts Starts with the Heart (the Podcast)

Sharon Brubaker has devoted herself to providing a unique service of helping women process and move through grief she is a Grief Specialist and Certified Life Coach. As a Grief Specialist, Certified Life Coach, and owner of The Grief School she is devoted to educating the broken-hearted on how to handle such difficult times. For well over 16 years, she has facilitated an educational program on grief and loss.

Sharon Brubaker has devoted herself to providing a unique service of helping women process and move through grief she is a Grief Specialist and Certified Life Coach. As a Grief Specialist, Certified Life Coach, and owner of The Grief School she is devoted to educating the broken-hearted on how to handle such difficult times. For well over 16 years, she has facilitated an educational program on grief and loss.

When you do join a talk therapy group one of the first things they will share with you is the fact that you will never get over this pain. You will never feel the same again. They will share with you how healing a broken heart is impossible and that you should not even try.

Sharon believes all of this to be untrue.

Erica Honore knows the pain of heartache all too well. As a Grief Specialist and mother who has suffered devastating losses, she vowed to never allow another woman to suffer through grief alone. She gives thanks for her brave sister's refusal to accept "living with this" as an answer - enabling Erica herself to heal from within.

Erica Honore knows the pain of heartache all too well. As a Grief Specialist and mother who has suffered devastating losses, she vowed to never allow another woman to suffer through grief alone. She gives thanks for her brave sister's refusal to accept "living with this" as an answer - enabling Erica herself to heal from within.

### **My Coaching Philosophy ~ Sharon**

Behind every strong woman is an even stronger story of loss and resilience. We strive to be a source of comfort, helping them hit their own reset button and heal from that pain as they seek greater fulfillment in life. With our guidance, these remarkable individuals can discover new pathways towards self-growth and transformation!

### **My Coaching Philosophy ~ Erica**

Our mission is to change the way we come together in times of grief, reminding us all that no one should ever have to face it alone. Together we strive to create a revolution of compassion and understanding that opens the door to grieving hearts around the world.

**We have included some things in this guide that will give you a chance for us to get to know each other a little better.**

Sharon Brubaker ~ Website

[www.sharonbrubaker.com](http://www.sharonbrubaker.com)

Grief Healing ~ The Facebook Group for Women Who Grieve ~ Join Here

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hope.heal.recover>

The connection to our Podcast so that you can hear us teach grief and brokenness.

<http://healingstartswiththeheart.libsyn.com>

Connections to our website and our Blog:

<https://www.healingstartswiththeheart.com/blog/>

Here is the connection to our YouTube Channel where you will be able to watch videos of our work:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SharonandEricaHealingStartswiththeHeart>

Here is the direct link to our website:

<https://www.healingstartswiththeheart.com/>

TEDx: Sharon Brubaker:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nByss5eNj4k>

Facebook and Instagram:

<https://www.facebook.com/healingstartswiththeheart>

Thank you for taking the time out of your day to meet us. We know that you may feel vulnerable and scared to admit to yourself where you are really stuck in your grief process.

We also know that the tools we teach can change everything for you. Without these tools our life would be so different right now. We would not be living. We both cause ourselves a great deal of unnecessary suffering.

We are on a mission to make sure no griever has to endure any unnecessary prolonged suffering. Grieving is hard all by itself.

There is an entire world available to you that makes handling grief challenges less overwhelming.

You don't have to heal. But why would you not want to feel better?

We would be honored to be your grief coaches.

Let's Continue to Share Our Grief ~ Sharon and Erica