

## Retiree Benefits News



### Honoring the journey: Grief awareness for Retirees

August is **National Grief Awareness Month**. As we move through life, we accumulate not only memories and milestones but also moments of loss. For retirees, grief can take many forms—mourning the death of a loved one, adjusting to the loss of a career identity, or navigating changes in health, independence, or community. During **National Grief Awareness Month**, we pause to recognize these experiences and offer space for healing, reflection, and connection.

Understanding grief in retirement Grief is not a one-size-fits-all experience. It can be sudden or gradual, visible or hidden, and it doesn't follow a set timeline. For retirees, grief may be compounded by multiple transitions happening at once—such as downsizing a home, losing daily routines, or saying goodbye to long-time colleagues and friends.

Common sources of grief in retirement include:

- Loss of a spouse, partner, or close friend
- Changes in physical ability or health
- Relocation or separation from family
- Loss of purpose or identity after leaving the workforce

### Why awareness matters

Grief is often misunderstood or minimized, especially in older adults. Some may feel pressure to “stay strong” or avoid burdening others. But unacknowledged grief can affect mental, emotional, and even physical health.

**National Grief Awareness Month** encourages open conversations about loss and healing. It reminds us that:

- Grief is a natural response to loss.
- Everyone grieves differently.
- Support is essential—and available.

### Ways to cope and heal

Here are a few gentle ways retirees can honor their grief and support their well-being:

- Talk about it: Share your feelings with a trusted friend, family member, or counselor. Talking can lighten the emotional load.
- Join a support group: Many communities and organizations offer grief support groups specifically for older adults. These spaces provide connection and understanding.
- Create rituals of remembrance: Light a candle, plant a tree, or keep a journal. Personal rituals can help you process emotions and honor memories.

- Stay connected: Isolation can intensify grief. Stay engaged with your community, whether through volunteering, hobbies, or faith groups.
- Be kind to yourself: Healing takes time. Allow yourself to feel, rest, and seek joy without guilt.

### **You are not alone**

If you or someone you know is struggling with grief, know that help is available. Reach out to local senior centers, faith communities, or national organizations like the Grief Recovery Institute or AARP's grief resources.

This August, let's honor the strength it takes to grieve and the courage it takes to heal. Whether your loss is recent or long ago, your journey matters—and you don't have to walk it alone.