

Coping with loss: Should grieving for a loved one longer than a year be considered a mental illness?

After more than a decade of argument, psychiatry's most powerful body in the United States added a new disorder this week to its diagnostic manual: prolonged grief.

The decision marks an end to [a long](#) debate within the field of mental health, steering researchers and clinicians to view intense grief as a target for medical treatment, at a moment when many Americans are overwhelmed by loss.

The new diagnosis, prolonged grief disorder, was designed to apply to a narrow slice of the population who are incapacitated, pining and ruminating a year after a loss, and unable to return to previous activities.

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"I completely, utterly disagree that grief is a mental illness," said Joanne Cacciatore, an associate professor of social work at Arizona State University who has published widely on grief, and who operates the Selah Carefarm, a retreat for bereaved people.

...

"We would never put a time frame around when someone should or shouldn't feel that they have moved forward," said Catrina Clemens, who oversees the victim services department of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, which provides services to bereaved relatives and friends. The organization encourages bereaved people to seek mental health care, but has no role in diagnosis, said a spokesperson.

[This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.](#)