

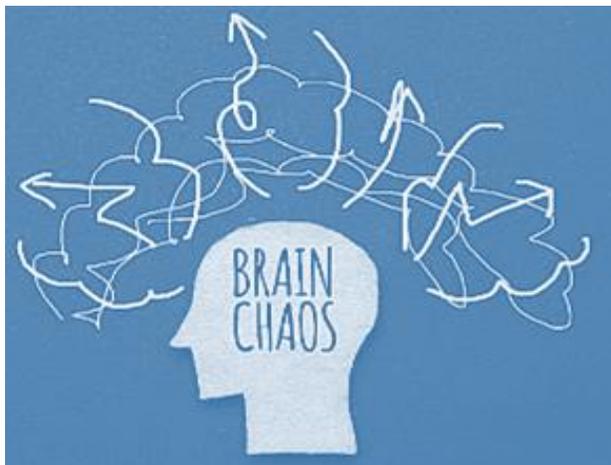
# SIX TRICKS YOUR BRAIN plays on you during grief

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Why would your brain trick you, especially at a time when you need it most? Because it isn't perfect.

Keep reading and you'll begin to recognize how our brain's imperfections can influence you during the most difficult time of your life.



## TRICK #1: I WILL FEEL THIS WAY FOREVER

When the death occurred, you absolutely believed that you would never laugh again; but you did. Do you remember that first time? Were you surprised when you heard laughter and realized that it was coming from you?

## TRICK #2: GUILT

Perhaps the cruelest trick your brain plays on you is one where the past continues to be rewritten. Just look at all the ways that guilt can complicate your grief. See if any of these sounds familiar:

### ◆ If-only guilt.

After the death you find yourself revisiting events in the life of your loved one in which you say, "If only..." or "I should have...." or "Why didn't I?"

### ◆ Role guilt.

"I wasn't a good enough \_\_\_\_\_ to this person." We're still waiting for the perfect (choose one) parent, spouse, sibling, grandparent, child.

### ◆ Death causation guilt.

"The death occurred because of something I did or failed to do. It matters little whether I actually had any-thing to do with the death. I still feel guilty."

**TRICK #3:  
I NEED TO GRIEVE JUST RIGHT**

This trick is often played on those who have issues with perfectionism. The death you've experienced is like no other. Therefore, the grief reactions you experience thrust you into a world that is foreign to you. A part of your brain asks, "What's wrong with me? Why am I so \_\_\_\_\_?"

Why these reactions?

**It's just your struggling brain  
doing the best it can.**

**TRICK #4:  
MY GRIEF IS WORSE THAN ANYONE ELSE'S**

When you began to meet people who experienced a similar loss, your brain may have concluded, "Their loss is terrible, but they must not have loved their person as much as I love mine."

You now realize that you can never measure the amount of another's pain. You have come to understand that:

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in our humanness, we are all  
united by our grief because  
it demonstrates that we all  
have loved.

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**TRICK #5:  
I WILL GET A LITTLE BETTER EACH DAY**

You may have discovered that day 90 following the death was worse than day 30 and that you may have felt worse at the ten-month point than you did at the five-month point. Why is this?

One reason is shock, which is your brain's way of cushioning the intensity of the blow and when shock begins to wear off, the pain begins to set in.

**TRICK #6:  
LETTING GO OF MY GRIEF MEANS  
LETTING GO OF MY LOVED ONE**

This brain maneuver is one of the biggest challenges in coping with grief. If you could actually hear your brain speaking to you, the words would sound something like this: "Now that some time has gone by, I can feel that the intensity of my loss easing up just a little. But wait! I can't let this happen because **if the pain begins to leave, the memories of my loved one will slip away as well.** So, I must hold on to my sorrow, heartache, and anguish in order to preserve the connection with this person."

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An important part of your  
grief work is to hold on to  
the memories while  
simultaneously letting the  
pain gradually subside.

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**So, there they are: six tricks of the brain  
that complicate the bereavement process.**

A couple of them may have been new to you as you realize that the death of your loved one has challenged your brain in ways it has never experienced before. In considering these tricks, you will now hopefully be a little kinder to your brain as it continues to cope with loss of someone you love.