

# Over 40 life experiences you might have that cause grief



We're indebted to psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe for the insightful research that led to the Holmes-Rahe Stress Scale. The now-famous scale details the 43 life events that are most liable to create feelings of grief, and in turn cause illness and other health-related problems. Although we use the word grief, rather than stress, we are in total accord with the [list of grief-producing events](#). Our only problem with the list is that it is comparative and as such, ranks losses in a hierarchy on a point system. Since we believe all loss is experienced at 100%—even though not all losses are equal—we choose to present the list in the same order as Holmes-Rahe created it; with the only difference being that we omit the listing of point totals for each loss.

We'd like to point out that not all of the life experiences on the list would logically be viewed as stressors or grief or loss events. Note that near the top of the list is "marriage." While we all know that the wedding day can be stressful, and that marriage is not without problems, we also know it's often referred to as one of the greatest days of our lives. Additionally, the list includes "change in financial state," which is not limited to losing money, but includes the impact of a sudden windfall, like winning the lottery.

Our definition of Grief

"Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of or change in a familiar pattern of behavior."

In addition to the life-events listed, we add a few more under the heading of "intangible," for example: Loss of Trust, Loss of Approval, Loss of Safety, and Loss of Control of my body, among others.

Grieving Events

- Death of a spouse
- Divorce
- Marital separation
- Imprisonment
- Death of a close family member
- Personal injury or illness
- Marriage
- Dismissal from work
- Marital reconciliation
- Retirement
- Change in health of family member
- Pregnancy
- Sexual difficulties
- Gain a new family member
- Business readjustment
- Change in financial state
- Death of a close friend
- Change to different line of work
- Change in frequency of arguments
- Major mortgage
- Foreclosure of mortgage or loan
- Change in responsibilities at work
- Child leaving home

- Trouble with in-laws
- Outstanding personal achievement
- Spouse starts or stops work
- Begin or end school
- Change in living conditions
- Revision of personal habits
- Trouble with boss
- Change in working hours or conditions
- Change in residence
- Change in schools
- Change in recreation
- Change in church activities
- Change in social activities
- Minor mortgage or loan
- Change in sleeping habits
- Change in number of family reunions
- Change in eating habits
- Vacation
- Christmas
- Minor violation of law
- Loss of Trust, Loss of Approval, Loss of Safety and Loss of Control of my body