

# Postelection Grief Is Real — Here's How to Cope

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Yahoo Beauty November 9, 2016



Image courtesy Giphy

On Wednesday, more than [47.5 percent of American voters](#) — making up the majority of the popular vote — either went to sleep with, or woke up to, the knowledge that their candidate, Hillary Clinton, had lost the electoral vote and thus, the election. News that [Donald Trump is officially our 45th president](#) is more than just a shocking upset for these people: For many of them, it's cause for real, clinical grief.

CNN posted a [montage of people breaking down](#) in public as they realized the Republican candidate was taking a strong lead. Even some newscasters and pundits were having difficulty hiding their outrage. [CNN political commentator Van Jones](#) choked back tears during live coverage of the election as he wondered aloud what kind of example a Trump presidency would set for the future of America, citing Trump's bigotry, bullying, and lack of preparation for debates. And, of course, social media was flooded with expressions of grief from Hillary supporters and third-party voters. On Wednesday, two trending hashtags — [#NotMyPresident](#) and [#StillWithHer](#) — were devoted to reactions of people distraught to see Trump take office.

**CNN** @CNN

Devastation and frustration echoed through the Javits Center as it became clear that Donald Trump won the election [cnn.it/2fCmZin](http://cnn.it/2fCmZin)

10.4K 1:20 PM - Nov 9, 2016

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demonstration of the Kübler-Ross Five Stages of Grief model," wrote another.

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 **Meena**   
@VeraFarmigasEye

Never did I think I'd cry myself to sleep bc of an election. Here's to a better tomorrow. Love you all 😊 #StillWithHer  
[#LoveTrumpsHate](#)

👍 308 8:08 AM - Nov 9, 2016

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Today's Trump-related Twitter trends are a precise demonstration of the Kübler-Ross Five Stages of Grief model [#NotMyPresident #StillWithHer pic.twitter.com/QCFptx1CV7](#)  
— WildGooseBWC (@WildGoose9000) November 9, 2016

For many, tears of heartbreak replaced tears of hope. "One of the hardest parts of this [election] for me is remembering the absolute joy I felt going to the polls yesterday in my white outfit, crying tears of happiness," says Jessica Cerretani of Massachusetts, where 61 percent of people voted for Clinton. "I saw that in the faces of other voters too. Today I feel dead inside and am in disbelief that our country supports this kind of hate. I'm numb. I also find this super-triggering: It is essentially the equivalent of being told to 'Sit down and shut up, you dumb b\*\*\*h.'"

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Cerretani is, of course, referring to the [accusations of sexual assault and misogyny](#) lobbed at Trump during his entire presidential campaign. For many victims of sexism and sexual violence, it is terrifying and difficult to fathom that a man who allegedly assaulted women and bragged about sexual assault could become the leader of the free world.

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 **captain oblivious**  
@helenabadger

Raise your hand if you feel personally victimized by the American people [#themorningafter #election #stillwithher](#)

👍 369 2:51 PM - Nov 9, 2016

💬 160 people are talking about this

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 **olivia**  
@dicaprio4everxo

If I, a white woman, am this terrified, it's staggering to put myself in the shoes of LGBTQ, POC, etc. [#HesNotMyPresident #stillwithher](#)

👍 331 8:57 AM - Nov 9, 2016

💬 135 people are talking about this

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But it's not only Trump's transgressions that smack of sexism; the very fact that the candidate who lost is female has made many women feel targeted and victimized by their own government — and by 49 percent of the citizens of their own country.

"I think the grief started before the election was even called for Trump," admits Nicole Mertineit, also of Massachusetts. "I started feeling sick to my stomach and panicky. I was overcome with emotion — for myself, my friends and family members, and for the country. I woke up this morning with a migraine. I haven't been able to eat anything all day. I feel this profound sense of loss."

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Afraid of playing into the stereotype of the "hyperemotional woman," Hillary supporter Shannon Stewart, a mother of two girls, tells Yahoo Beauty that when she learned the election results, she felt grief, but she didn't cry. "You know why? Crying will only make me appear more like 'This is how women cope: They can't handle it when they don't get their way.' I don't want to appear 'dramatic.' Isn't that the saddest thing ever?" Stewart admits her grief is manifesting in other ways. "I have a stiff neck and I can't seem to focus on anything."

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And it's important to note that it's not just women that are grieving the election outcome. [Writer Jef Rouner](#) of Texas, the majority of which voted for Trump, tells Yahoo Beauty, "The grief I felt as Donald Trump's election became inevitable was terrible. I watched a map turn red, and through the vortex of the future I could hear the thousands of men that would gleefully tear my wife, my daughter, and my friends down for the crime of being female until they day they died. Trump has repowered the worst of humanity, and after we'd come so far it's a bitter pill to swallow."

And in Clinton's adopted home state of New York, voter Joel Hamilton tells Yahoo Beauty of the moment grief struck him, and grappling with the task of breaking the news of the election to his 7-year-old daughter. "Waking up to a beautiful sunset drained of hope ... I told her Trump had won the election, but New York City had voted for Hillary. ... Hillary represented something to her, and therefore me, that transcended email servers and campaign promises. ... I then reminded her that we would stay close, that love is the most important thing we have, and we would be OK."

[Psychoanalyst Deb Sandella](#) expands on the scope of grief for individuals and their families. "Grief is not an event; it is a process," she tells Yahoo Beauty. "Be patient and compassionate with yourself. It will eventually pass; however, it does take time for the body to process the many feelings of loss, [such as] shock, helplessness, anger, and sadness." Sandella suggests that the grief-stricken "begin expressing the feelings into words. If [you're] alone, write them on paper or speak with a like-minded friend." She encourages letting emotions flow instead of bottling them up, so "they don't take up residence in the body and cause depression or physical symptoms."

Nash offers some of her own solutions for coping in the short term. "I would suggest that to get through your day — whether in the workplace or life in general — it would be a good plan to have a safe place to go if tears well up: outside for a walk, down the hall for a break, or in the shower as you wash up in the a.m." She notes that recovering from grief is a two-pronged process: healing on the inside *and* the outside. She says, "Healing on the inside can include meditation, relaxation exercises, praying, or talking with a dear trusted friend or family member. Eating and sleeping well are most important. Treatment for the outside can involve a warm bath, viewing greenery in nature, a walk through a beautiful museum or art gallery ... or reaching out to listen to and help others or talking with a grief counselor."

Nash urges people to be forthcoming about their feelings, as hard as it can be. Whether your daily routine involves work, school, caring for children, or basically anything else that requires showing up and interacting with people, "have a phrase ready to reply to others, such as, 'I'm not myself today. Still reeling from the election news.'" She adds that acknowledging your emotions is part of the process toward healing. "This first stage of numbness will pass as you share your feelings with others," Nash says.

Some reports have indicated that election-related grief is leading to thoughts of self-harm and suicide, especially among young people, and that calls to suicide hotlines reached capacity on election night and Nov. 9. Yahoo Beauty reached out to Frances Gonzalez, director of communications at the [National Suicide Prevention Hotline](#), who said, "The Lifeline did see an increase in calls over the past few days, though we have been able to manage the volume thanks to our national network of crisis centers and backup centers." Gonzalez recommends managing negative emotions by sticking to routines, seeking social support, limiting interaction with things that might aggravate your stress, and being compassionate. And if you're experiencing thoughts of self-harm or suicide, call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline immediately at 800-273-8255.

If you're in the presence of someone who you're sure is experiencing postelection grief, and you want to console them, Nash suggests "being 'present with them,' and 'witnessing their grief,' mostly by being with them and listening without judgment as they express their feelings. It is best to say something like, 'I can't know totally how you feel, but I am here to listen to you as you tell me how you feel.'"

"The invitation is for Trump supporters to be compassionate and careful not to gloat, because our relationships are more important than our differences," notes Sandella. "It's time to unify and come together. Allowing grieving folks to express without trying to fix them is perfect. Listening compassionately shows them that someone sees them and cares about them."

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