

Fans of long-running TV show experienced grief similar to losing a close friend when show ended, study finds

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Credit: Ron Lach from Pexels

A psychologist at CQUniversity, in Australia, has found that some fans of the long-running TV show "Neighbours" have been experiencing grief

similar to the experience of losing a close friend. In his study, [published](#) on the open-access site *PLOS ONE*, Adam Gerace analyzed surveys taken by over 1,289 people.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that fans of television shows often feel a connection with the characters and experience a [sense](#) of loss when a show ends. The longer a show runs, presumably, the deeper the sense of loss.

In this new effort, Gerace focused his effort on the TV show "Neighbours," which has been running in Australia and the U.K. for 37 years—longer than many of the relationships viewers have had in real life. To better understand that sense of loss, Gerace asked volunteers to fill out online [surveys](#) regarding how they felt about the show ending.

To gain some sense of the type and degree of loss felt by viewers of the show, the survey was designed to measure the degree of [grief](#) and other emotions and thoughts about not just the show, but the individual characters who were portrayed.

It also asked about the degree of acceptance that the show had really ended, the distress felt about the loss of characters and whether they felt closure as the show ended. And finally, it asked about whether they felt any gratitude for those who had been involved in its production.

In looking at responses, Gerace found what he describes as a high level of grief in many viewers, along with a difficulty accepting that the show and their favorite characters were suddenly gone (the show ended two years ago). He noted also that such feelings appeared to be stronger in people who had formed "parasocial" relationships with the characters—many of them thought of the [characters](#) as friends of a sort, or at the least an extended part of their social group.

He suggests the responses from viewers indicate that they experienced grief similar to the loss of a real-life partner, friend or other close person.

More information: Adam Gerace et al, When TV neighbours become good friends: Understanding Neighbours fans' feelings of grief and loss at the end of the series, *PLOS ONE* (2024). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0302160](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0302160)

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