

Grief & Wellness Services

Grief Resolution, Understanding and Acceptance

Coping With Grief

What is Grief?

Grief is the natural and normal physical, mental, emotional and spiritual response to any significant loss. Its depth is in direct proportion to the degree of attachment and love that we have to that loss. The best way that I can describe Grief is to suggest that it is the most painful experience of chaos that we will ever experience. The dictionary defines chaos as "the state of matter before the universe was reduced to order" There is no pain as severe as Grief. It is that gut wrenching, mind numbing, dry retching state that renders us almost useless.

What Grief is Not!

1. Grief is not a life sentence
2. Grief is not insurmountable
3. Grief is not a long term compulsory disorder requiring medication
4. Grief is not a bad thing
5. Grief is not the enemy
6. Grief is not quickly resolved

What Impedes the Resolution of Grief?

1. Denial
2. Revenge
3. Hatred
4. Unwillingness to deal with the pain of grief
5. Unawareness of how to deal with the pain of grief
6. Resentment
7. An unforgiving heart
8. A heart that has lost love
9. A decision to stay in your grief
10. Self pity
11. Sometimes our Belief systems
12. Permanence theory
13. Academic unrealities
14. Unresolved past life crises

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15. Excessive Drug or Alcohol intake
16. Social Stigma e.g. Suicide
17. Poor employers attitudes and Workplace Laws
18. Cliches
19. Deification of our Loved One
20. Legal necessities, Coroners reports, Court Cases etc
21. High Risk taking activities
22. Escapism through work, sport or other activities
23. Sublimation of our feelings

What is the Goal of our Grief Experience?

“The ultimate goal of grief work is to be able to remember without emotional pain and to be able to re-invest emotional surpluses. While the experience of grief work is difficult and slow and wearing, it is also enriching and fulfilling.

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths.

These people have an appreciation, sensitivity and an understanding of life, which fills them with compassion, gentleness and a deep loving concern.

Beautiful people do not just happen.”

Elisabeth Kubler Ross.

How Do We Cope?

You can't heal what you don't feel. Academic Reasoning or the Absence of it does not resolve grief.

Grief is the worst pain known and it is an unbelievable cocktail of emotions and at the same time it is the ultimate barometer of our love. We must learn to sit with our pain, little by little and thus we disempower it. Grief is not something that happens to you; grieving is something that you do. We must not run away from our pain but learn to go through it and thus we master it and learn how much inner courage we have. There is a direct relationship with pain and suffering and I offer the following remarks for your exploration.

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GRIEF = PAIN

PAIN + RESISTANCE = SUFFERING

PAIN + AWARENESS = ACCEPTANCE

PAIN MEETS FEAR = PITY

PAIN MEETS LOVE = COMPASSION

When we encounter the pain of grief we very often react or recoil from it; rather than respond to it. It seems as if we are almost naturally conditioned to do this. Aversion to pain is a reaction to pain. We do not want to face it and sit with it because it is too difficult and it hurts us so very much. We give it power and thereby authorise it to diminish our current feelings and life experience. Our decision to turn our backs upon it restricts us from getting very far because we have gone in the opposite direction to healing and recovery. The task of facing our pain and responding to it is extremely difficult. I do not proclaim it to be otherwise. It is the hardest thing you will ever do and it will give you the greatest rewards of any course of action that you will ever undertake.

Relating **to** our pain instead of **from** our pain is what it is all about. Relating to our pain brings acceptance and peace; running away from it brings misery. Pain is a given in life – whilst you have a body and mind you will always have pain. It keeps you alive and functional. Suffering is not a given –it is how we handle our pain. Suffering is resistance to pain. Mental and physical pain attracts grief. Pain makes life very difficult to focus and to be stable as it can easily cause fear, anger and creates total chaos with our emotions.

Look at your grief and see if it has collected any anger and has it developed a tendency to want to blame, blame, blame! Grief is all about loss, the death or removal of someone or something deeply cherished. It is all about separation. If we want to heal and be free of the pain then we have to concentrate our work in this area.

Suffering is resistance to pain. A lot of our suffering is created by our own choices –some is not. Be kind to yourself. Do not be a “strong toughie” Those who adopt this approach are the very opposite. Strong toughies run away from life.

We hold false beliefs and understandings about our permanency and the projected permanency of others across the age spectrums. Our suffering is caused by our holding on to things that might have been, should have been and could have been. Grief is a part of daily living. We suffer so much less when our understanding of life includes the reality of impermanency and the acceptance of death as being part of the natural order of things.

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Allow Yourself to Grieve

You need to openly express your feelings as topsy-turvy as they are; it is your true expression of how you feel as a result of the death of your loved one. It is a vital part of your healing. Understand that there is no manual given, as there wasn't at their birth. Both experiences are ones of love. Do not strangle your emotions for fear that others will disapprove. It is not always easy with young children.

Realise Your Grief is Yours Alone

Your grief is unique. No one else on this earth will feel it as you do. It has evolved because of your individual physical, mental, emotional and spiritual relationship with your loved one. Try to understand it as it is – the incontrovertible evidence of your love. At this point we often mistakenly believe that the relationship has finished.

Expect and Accept Your Mixed Range of Emotional States

Grief has rightly been described as a “dance” where we go forward and backwards. It is never lineal. Do not be afraid of this pattern. You are not a disturbed soul but one that has had their life disrupted by life's companion – death. We, in the Western world, find death less than acceptable as we seem to have slotted it away for some in the future and then and only then shall we consider it. Your emotional day may include such feelings as lethargy, anger, nausea, intense sorrow, joy, fear, disbelief, jealousy, anguish, regret and many more and in any order. This is normal grief behaviour.

Be Kind to Yourself

It is very probable that you live in a state of perpetual tiredness and you do not need to make it worse for yourself by false incriminations. Be kind to yourself. Accept yourself for who you really are – someone who has had a loved one die and is totally lost and is floundering in the painful experience. Grief is enervating. Understand that being available to all is not practical and will drain whatever energy you have left. Share your normal daily burdens and accept your life for what it is at that point in time. Live one day at a time. Some things are within your control, and some things are not.

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Discuss Your Grief

Do not be railroaded by those who wish you to deny your loved one's existence and not talk about it. Share your feelings as it is a very healing experience and it validates your life and your loved ones. Speak openly about them just as you did when they were with you.

Avoid the Job Comforters

Part of the grief experience is to be delivered a cliché or equally heartless piece of advice from a relative, close friend or professional. They invariably come from those who have never experienced grief. Stay away from them, despite their relationship to you or their belief systems.

Remember Your Loved One

“Line by line, moment by moment, special times are etched into our memories in the permanent ink of everlasting love” ~ Gloria Gaither

There are so many ways that you can honour your loved one. Collect their memories in book or album form, legacies, fundraising activities, memorial gardens, writing, locket of hair, memory boxes, photographs etc

“Memories are the key not to the past, but to the future” Corrie ten Boom

Develop Support Systems

A very powerful and proven way of assisting you to find peace is to develop support systems. You may be able to have one consisting of family and friends and another that is a Support Group established to meet the needs of your circumstances i.e. bereaved parent, spouse etc. By sharing your feelings you help download those pent up emotions, which can be most beneficial in giving your life a more global perspective. It won't fix things there and then but it will validate you and reassure you that you are not suffering from a “mental” condition; you are just being very normal.

Make sure that those in whatever system you prefer are honest, positive and allow you to be who you are on the day.

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Meditation

There are a number of different forms of meditation and you should investigate them and find the one that is the most effective for you. In my case it is Transcendental Meditation as guided meditation distracts me. It could be totally the opposite for you. The psychological, spiritual and physical benefits are irrefutable and you may wish to find a group that regularly practices this most beneficial exercise.

Walking

Bushwalking is a wonderful and peaceful form of exercise. The beauty that is nature can help us to find some sanity in the world that has recently challenged us to accept that it has any purpose; leastwise a purpose that involves the death of our loved one. A regular beach walk is extraordinarily powerful. There is an eternal force that rolls over our being as we absorb the oceans sounds and sights. It seems to me as if the ocean is reminding us that life is a series of ongoing events which are influenced by a power beyond our total comprehension and to observe its force and understand the purpose of its continuum. Walks in any environment can produce the same effect. There is a healing in regular physical exercise as it reprograms our brain to a regular pattern from which it can function.

Massage

A regular fortnightly or weekly massage can relieve an enormous amount of tension that builds up in our bodies as a direct result of the grief we are carrying. The body stores our emotions and they settle in our muscles and tissue. With a regular massage we can release this pent up pressure and assist our mind in placing our perspectives back into reality. When we hear the comment to “get it out of our system” we should take it as a profound direction.

Verbal Expression

We store up our emotions in our body and they can have a very negative effect upon our health. All functional storage systems have pressure release valves. We need to activate ours by releasing our tensions through the oral expression of our feelings. It can be very beneficial to scream, yell or simply state our feelings to the “Universe” This expulsion reduces the stressors in our body and once again allows us to balance our perspectives. We should do this whenever we feel “uptight” however the place where we do it may need some consideration as the supermarket aisle may cause slight consternation to those making the choice of which breakfast cereal may advance their digestion. Dial a friend when you feel the need to down load some of your pain.

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Breathing Techniques

There are many ways in which we can use various different breathing techniques to release stress and advance our well being. I suggest that you investigate them as they are most powerful. The maximising of oxygen to our bodies is revitalising and helps maintain our bodily functions. Please retain the practice of breathing as all of life's solutions result from this pleasant habit.

Music

There is untold healing power in music. Choose whatever music you love and play it when you like. Music soothes the spirit and invigorates the soul - play your loved one's music as well as your own. It will help you relax and free the mind from some its incessant chatter.

Gymnasiums

The use of physical exertion is a positive way of expunging those emotional demons that build up in our bodies as a result of the pain that grief engages. For those of us who no longer can defy the law of gravity it can also help refashion its outcome. The first Law of Lycra states "whatever is confined into a small space must expand in a contradictary manner."

Yoga/Tai Chi etc

All forms of these spiritual practices have enormous benefit to the participant. The use of a physical discipline to enhance the wellbeing and "wholeness" of our bodies is without dispute. The power of a group to further build an experience is also indisputable.

Routines

The establishment of routines is what we have built our lives upon before "the assassin struck our fold" and this practice brought stability and direction. As difficult as it is to desire a return to our daily habits the brain directs the body functions much better when it has a known and proven pathway to follow. With gentle persuasion we can push through the pain barrier and resume the newly adjusted routine. Do NOT force any habit that sublimates a reality.

Love Never Dies

Honour Your Loved One By Walking In The World For Them