

A *Grief* Story

I set my devotional book down and noticed the clock: 6 a.m. That gnawing feeling returned as I recalled how many times I had gotten Meg's coffee ready. We had both been early-birds, but my day always started a little earlier. The sound of her alarm was my signal to get her cup ready. Two-thirds full with a splash of water to cool it off. As I looked at her place on the couch, it hurt to know that no cup would be needed.

It had been six weeks since her funeral, but I still expected to hear her stirring in the other room. Now only silence.

It was the same house, but nothing seemed the same. I did the dishes and I wiped out the sink like she always did. I changed the bed linens and I did my best to tuck the sheet corners under like she did. But it wasn't that I couldn't do it like her, it was that more than anything I just wanted her here with me as I did it.

I had heard that losing someone was like this and that it hurt deeply. And now I guess my journey had begun.



"If there ever comes a day where we can't be together, keep me in your heart. I'll stay there forever."

A. A. Milne
Winnie the Pooh

ISSUE 1

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TABITHA

FROM OUR BEREAVEMENT TEAM

We understand that the first days, weeks and months after the loss of a loved one may be filled with mixed emotions and tasks to be completed. It may seem overwhelming and you may feel these things obscure your ability to truly grieve. It is a necessary and natural part of the grief journey.

Grief is unique to every individual. There is no time limit to grief. During this time, we hope you will feel embraced by others around you to provide comfort and support. Additional support from our Bereavement team is also available through individual calls, visits, grief groups, remembrance services, and Embrace newsletter. The Embrace newsletter will be sent over the next 18 months.

If you have any questions about current events or grief support, please give us a call or visit our website www.tabitha.org/bereavement.

Remember, grief is a journey, and Tabitha is here for you every step of the way.

Your Grief

Journey

In the beginning, your grief is new and raw; it's overwhelmingly painful and scary. It is important that you not try to change it. As hard as it may be, however, you must experience the full impact of your loss. Follow it, cry when you want, yell when you need to, scream into your pillow when you're overwhelmed. Don't avoid it or try to change it. It's your grief! Claim it. Experience it. And don't let anyone take away your right to it.

"Am I going crazy?" No, you're not going crazy. And you are not alone in feeling like you are "losing it." When you think about the overwhelming loss you've experienced, it is a sign of inner strength—the same inner strength that will carry you forward. You will survive this—sanity intact—and eventually go on to reclaim your life and some degree of joy, despite your loss.

There are many ways in which grief can touch you—physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. It's an all-encompassing,

universal human experience. There is a wide range of grief symptoms, and you may wonder what is "normal" and what is not. Rest assured that almost any symptom you may experience, although perhaps alarming at any other time, is perfectly normal during the grief journey.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a leading educator on grief and loss, wrote in his book *Understanding Your Grief*, "Grief is not a disease. Instead, it is the normal, healthy process of embracing the mystery of the death of someone loved." Grief is neither a sign of weakness nor a problem to be solved. Grief is transition; it is your personal journey toward a new normal.

If we experience love, we will experience sorrow; where there has been suffering, there can be healing. In many ways, our modern society teaches us to believe that life—and therefore death—is a problem to be solved. Grief is not something to be cured but rather incorporated into life.

FIVE SELF-CARE TIPS

- 1— Get plenty of sleep. Grief work is hard. Eat and exercise in a healthy manner.
- 2— Maintain your health. Keep appointments with medical and/or mental health providers. Avoid "numbing" yourself with substances.
- 3— Express your grief. Reach out to those who care when you need someone to listen.
- 4— Place boundaries with unhelpful people. Sometimes "best intentions" affect bereaved individuals differently.
- 5— Allow yourself "breaks" from caregiving and grieving. Allow time for healing.

THE MOURNER'S BILL OF RIGHTS

Dr. Alan Wolfelt explains that as a bereaved person, you have certain rights that others must not take away from you. In fact, it is upholding these rights that makes healing possible.

You have the right to:

- Experience your own unique grief
- Talk about your grief and your loved one
- Feel a wide range of emotions
- Make use of a ritual that is comforting to you
- Listen to your body and be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits
- Let the tears flow
- Not be rushed through your grief
- Search for meaning
- Your memories
- Move toward finding personal healing from grief

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This confusing mix of sadness, anger, joy, and guilt is completely normal after the death of a loved one. It even has a name: Grief.

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Spiritual Corner

By Chaplain Kurt Coleman

I will call on God, and the Lord will rescue me.

Psalm 55:16

Is what I am feeling normal? How should I feel? Am I grieving correctly? The emotions I am having feel like a roller coaster, laughing one moment and unstoppable tears of sadness the next. Where is God? It feels like God is nowhere to be found.

Chances are you can identify with one of these questions. The truth is, grief is a journey, not a destination—and no two journeys are the same. Grief has always been part of the process of living and dying, and the way each person grieves is as unique as each individual. Is it normal to feel angry and happy in the span of three minutes? The answer for you may be yes. What's important in those moments is to allow yourself to feel what you feel; do not try to suppress the feeling or try to change the way you feel. Be kind to yourself; be patient with your feelings; and above all else, invite God into your grief.

God created you with emotions, and those emotions are there for your benefit in the grief process. God also did not create you to take this journey alone. He longs to come alongside you and be your guide into the unknown. Simply pray, "Heavenly Father, I invite you into my grief. Thank you that I do not have to do this alone. Guide me on this journey." The One who created you with these emotions desires to help you navigate them. Trust Him today.