

A *Grief* Story

The pamphlet title said it all: *Tears and Talk*. The last two things I wanted to do were cry around a bunch of strangers and talk about Meg.

Yet, as much as I resisted, I also knew that I was stuck. It had been months since losing her, and it just seemed that I couldn't get past how I felt that first day.

Life had returned to "normal" in many ways. I had gone back to work and started a new routine that included the gym. I kept up the house and was learning to cook for myself, though most days it seemed ridiculous to make a meal for one. I had even gone down to the humane society as I considered getting a dog.

Yet none of it took away the heavy weight I still felt in my heart. And in my mind, I knew it would not change by itself.

And so at the encouragement of my daughter and to my great dismay, I opened the door to the meeting.



"Remembering the person I have loved allows me to slowly heal. Healing does not mean I will forget. Actually, it means I will remember. Gently, I will move forward, never forgetting my past."

Dr. Alan Wolfelt
Center for Loss and Life Transition

ISSUE 4

- The Grieving Heart
- Your Grief Journey
- Six Needs of Grief
- Secondary Losses
- Spiritual Corner
- A Grief Story



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THE GRIEVING HEART

The grieving process creates change in your life—and in yourself—that allows you to gradually let go of your need for the lost one. Grief helps you come to terms with this, and to refocus your energies toward the future. Grief is not about "returning to normal." You will never be the same as you were. Grief is about finding a new life for yourself.

As hard as you may find it to believe right now, the pain will eventually ease up and allow you to reinvent your life and your identity. You will reinvest in life and find yourself planning for the future with some degree of joy in being alive.

You will begin to sense new beginnings and experience a new dawning of life that slowly replaces the previous despair, desolation and darkness.

Your Grief Journey

While it has been some months since your loved one died, the struggle with time can be a normal response to your mourning. Grief takes time.

It is also natural to search for meaning or try to make sense of why someone you loved died. The key in your grief is to give yourself the permission to ask such questions. Most bereaved do not find comfort in “pat” answers that well-meaning people try to give.

Grief support groups can be a wonderful place to find affirmation that you are not alone, where it is okay to feel, think or wonder things aloud about your loss.

Another good resource can be writing. Jotting down thoughts in a notebook or journal lets you to go back, review and see your journey with grief, allowing recognition of where you have been and how far you have come.

The important thing is to find a tool or resource that allows you to explore those thoughts, feelings and questions. Healing in grief is not perfect; it is not about recovery. Rather, healing in grief is more about acceptance of the loss, and including this new reality into your life.

SIX NEEDS OF GRIEF

Identified by Dr. Alan Wolfelt in his book, *Understanding Your Grief*, there are six central needs of grief:

1 To experience and express, outside of yourself, the reality of the death.

2 To tolerate the pain that comes with the work of grief while taking care of yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually.

3 To convert your relationship with the person who died from one of presence to memory.

4 To develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died.

5 To relate the experience of your loss to a context of meaning.

6 To have an understanding support system available to you in the months and years ahead.

“Grief is like a long, winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape.”

C.S. Lewis

SECONDARY LOSSES

What people don't realize at first is the **rippling affect a significant loss may cause.** In the first weeks, you feel the first big splash the loss causes. But it is in the months that follow that you realize how many ripples that one big splash caused.

Perhaps the one you lost was the breadwinner and now you have to deal with the loss of income. Maybe, he or she had been your bookkeeper, driver, cook, mechanic or a thousand other things. For some people, the deceased was their confidant or the comedian of the family, the one who could always make you feel better about yourself.

You can be surprised by the secondary losses that come up. Some of them may feel unimportant, but they affect your life too—and all the “little things” put together can make a big impact. It is important to acknowledge these losses too. You have to grieve for them as well. Brace yourself for the adjustments you will have to continue to make in your life.

~ *Adapted from Kenneth C. Haugk
Journeying Through Grief, Book 2*

“The loss was difficult enough to deal with. I wasn't expecting this sudden change in 'job descriptions,' too.”

*Lorraine Peterson
Restore My Soul*

Spiritual Corner

By Chaplain Thayne Moore

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalm 34:18 NIV

In the midst of grief, we often find ourselves analyzing our grief, asking ourselves, “Am I doing grief right?”

At one moment, we may feel guilty because we think we are not grieving enough; then, in the next moment, we may wonder if we can continue living with this unbearable pain. We don't seek to move past the love and memories we cherish, but we just can't get a handle on our grief.

It feels like it has a life of its own. What brought relief one day may not bring comfort the next day.

In our culture, we seek solutions—there are numerous resources guiding us in life on what to do with all we face.

Grief is not something we do; there are no three steps to do our grief. We must feel our way through grief. At times, this can be frightening, because it seems our grief will never end.

Continue to express that grief in a way that fits your personality: perhaps through a group, a friend or journaling. Our hearts need to be expressed with grief over and over again. Take heart, for in time this may become a labor of love.