

## **Good Grief**

Grief is an expression of pain after a loss, and this pain demands to be felt and expressed. If emotional pain isn't expressed it will leak out somehow - through psychosomosis, an accident, an affair, alcohol or drug use or some such random expulsion. There is no doubt that the release of the emotional valve in such an unconscious manner will offer relief but it is not likely to provide much emotional growth. The sequence of managing pain goes something like this: pain, release, relief; until the next time one experiences pain, and then again it will often look like; pain, release, relief and so it goes on. An alternative cycle could be; pain, feel it, accept it, understand it, grow, feel joy. And then the next time one feels pain, the cycle might go like this; pain, feel it, accept it, feel it, learn, grow, feel more joyful. The pain felt after losing a loved one doesn't decrease each time you experience loss but one becomes familiar with the pain of grief and so there is less trauma.

Grief after losing a loved one is natural. Have you seen elephants mourning their dead? They stay around the bodies and the bones of their loved ones with what appears to be wet eyes. We find it moving, no? Yet when we grieve beyond the funeral, a week or so after the death of a loved one, it appears that people around us wish we buried our feelings too. We, too, may be in a hurry to do something about our sadness, our longing, something to dry out the tears. Someone will advise time off, a visit to the Doctor, medication, a holiday, a night out, something to cheer you up.

How does one feel the pain then? My unsolicited advice :) is don't see a therapist immediately after loss, unless you really are

unfamiliar with allowing yourself to feel pain, or if you had a complex relationship with your loved one. It is worth talking things through with a therapist once you have allowed yourself to go through the immediate shock, the immediate pain. It is also indeed useful to know the five stages of grief (Kubler-Ross & Kessler), so that you know the feelings you may experience, but you don't need to see a therapist to tell you what these are, look them up on the internet.

Traumatic loss is different to the grief felt after the 'natural' (or an illness connected to aging) death of an aged loved one and this is a whole different arena. A traumatic loss might involve the unexpected death of a loved one through sudden or unexpected illness, an accident, murder, warfare, or premature death of a child or a youth. Traumatic loss can result in extreme trauma, stress, depression, disconnection and suicide ideation as well as even possibly suicide. The treatment for traumatic loss needs substantial time, support, and often psychological intervention.

Mostly, grief needs to be felt not thought about. Immerse yourself in the pain, mope, cry, scream, take a vow of silence, retreat into your pain, if you can take time out. Some cultures prescribe a mourning period like 40 days, this may be a useful benchmark for full immersion, but chose what you feel is possible, affordable, bearable. Then, after this period return to your normal routine, still allowing yourself to cry or yell or be sad if you feel it. See a counsellor for further support. Trust that you will survive, remind yourself the living still have to live and though you died a little with your loved one, you will learn to live with this or maybe the feeling will pass. It's ok that you are in pain, you lost someone

you love; and the depth of your pain is a reflection of the depth of your love.

If this helps let me know. If you are struggling with grief, get in touch.

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