

Grief never ends, but it changes. It's a passage, not a place to stay. Grief is not a sign of weakness, it is the price of love.

- A n o n y m o u s

GRIEF: JOURNEY & SYMPTOMS

Understanding the Grief Journey

- Grief is not an enemy or a sign of weakness; it is a sign of being human.
- Your journey is your own, but you are not alone; do not be afraid to cry out to God.
- There is no right or wrong way to mourn your loss.
- The way you grieve will be uniquely your own.
- To mourn is to be an active participant in your grief journey.
- We all grieve when someone dies, but we must mourn if we are to heal.

In your grief journey, it is necessary that you take the roller coaster ride, reacting to the emotions as you feel them instead of trying to suppress them or cut short the ride. Feel what you feel. Give into the sadness and pain, and allow yourself to go at your own pace. Be gentle with yourself, this is a process.

Grief symptoms

People experience physical, emotional, and spiritual symptoms with grief.

- Physical manifestations may present as extreme fatigue, headache, nauseous feeling, insomnia, or some other conditions.

- Emotional manifestations may present as everything from deep sadness and a sense of “this is all so surreal” to guilt, fear, even anger.
- Spiritual manifestations may present as a sense of closeness or distance from God, being angry at God, isolation from one's spiritual community.

These manifestations are very normal. Knowing how grief can manifest will better prepare you to handle them should they surface.

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name; you are mine.
When you pass through the waters, I
will be with you; and when you pass
through the rivers, they will not sweep
over you. When you walk through
the fire, you will not be burned,
For I am the Lord your God"
-Isaiah 43:1-3

GRIEF: WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Grief brain

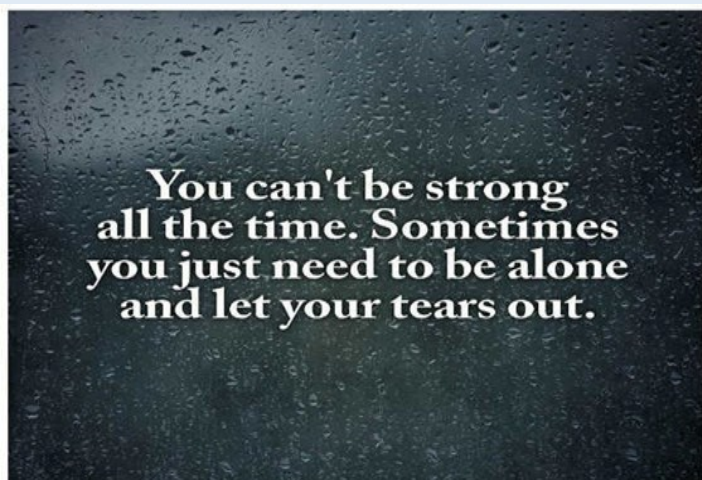
- Oftentimes the bereaved person will say, “Since my loved one died, I feel like I’m going crazy. I can’t remember things, things I once enjoyed I no longer do, food doesn’t taste the same...” An inability to focus, difficulty in making decisions and processing information, and disorganization are all symptoms of grief brain.

These changes in mental functioning are very normal. If you feel your symptoms are severe, please talk to your GP or seek other professional help.

What does grief feel like?

- Sometimes grief can feel like it controls us. Sometimes it feels like an enemy we have to fight. Sometimes it feels like a dangerous fog, or a pit of quicksand we can’t escape.
- Grief can sometimes feel so overwhelming, you wonder if you can survive it. It is however important to remember there are some things you can do to make your grief more bearable. These include taking care of your body; exploring healing ways to express your thoughts and feelings; sharing memories of your loved; and finding safe sources of support.

Be patient with yourself as you get used to all the changes your loss brings. Remember, healing doesn't mean forgetting the person who died. That person, and your relationship with them, will always be a part of you, kept alive in your memories



THE BIBLE AND MOURNING

The Bible and mourning



In the face of our most painful losses, it’s normal to experience many different reactions—in our body, thoughts, emotions, and spirit. As a whole, much of what we experience goes beyond words. To help us feel more anchored in the storms of loss, grief models attempt to give context to these experiences and language for common themes.

Grief models can’t tell us what we will experience, nor can they prescribe what we “should” feel, but they can help us better understand ourselves and others.

John 16:22 *So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.*

Isaiah 41:10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Psalms 46:1-2

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.

John 11:25-26

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

THE FOUR TASKS OF MOURNING

Grief model: The Four Tasks of Mourning

- Task One:** Coming to terms with the reality of the loss
- Task Two:** Processing the pain of grief
- Task Three:** Adjusting to a world without the person you've lost
- Task Four:** Finding a connection with your loved one as you move forward on your life journey.

How to engage: Task One: To accept the reality of the loss

"Grief is love not wanting to let go."

- By repeatedly telling your story
- Looking at family pictures/home movies

Developing rituals (Cook the loved one's favourite meal) etc.

- By visiting the gravesite.

Guilt can get in the way of completing this task. To some people, 'acceptance' implies agreement or approval, to others the guilt of severing ties (beliefs which complicate the task). Acceptance, however, doesn't have to mean these things; instead, it can mark the moment when you are ready to begin the journey of healing.

How to engage: Task Two: To work through the pain of grief

"When tears come... I am swimming in a hallowed stream... My heart is at work. My soul is awake"

- You've suffered a huge emotional wound- allow yourself to feel the pain
- Know that it will pass
- Let grief wash over you
- Remind yourself that others have survived, and so will you.

Grief brings up many emotions from sadness to loneliness, despair, emptiness, anger or guilt and countless others.

Perhaps the feelings are so intense they become intolerable, or maybe our lives have been such that we haven't yet learned to how to properly process our feelings.

Whatever emotions may be present, it is important to acknowledge, talk about, and understand them. We must be patient, allowing ourselves to experience all the these feelings in order to properly process them.

Tears are prayers too. They travel to God when we can't speak (Psalm 56:8)

How to engage: Task Three: Adjusting to a world without the person you've lost

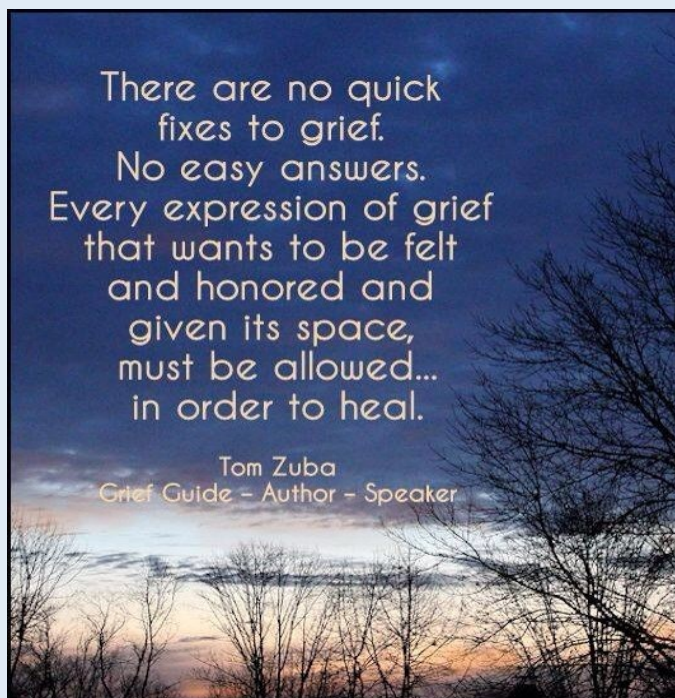
- Learn new skills (you can do it)
- Ask for help when you need it
- Decide what to do with loved one's clothes and other possessions
- Don't isolate yourself, however tempting
- Learn who you are now
- Assess your strengths and talents

This adjustment happens over a period of time and may require several types of adjustments; internal, external, and spiritual.

- Internal adjustments - refer to changes in your self-image or sense of self. (i.e. after the death of a spouse, the surviving spouse may struggle because they are no longer defined as part of a couple, instead they are now defined as a widow or widower).

There are no quick
fixes to grief.
No easy answers.
Every expression of grief
that wants to be felt
and honored and
given its space,
must be allowed...
in order to heal.

Tom Zuba
Grief Guide - Author - Speaker



ADJUSTING & ENGAGING

- External adjustments – include taking on responsibilities (managing finances, household chores etc.)
- Spiritual adjustments – comes into play when one experiences loss, Faith can be challenged, dashed, comforting or a new exploration.

This task requires developing the necessary skills to move confidently forward in the altered environment.

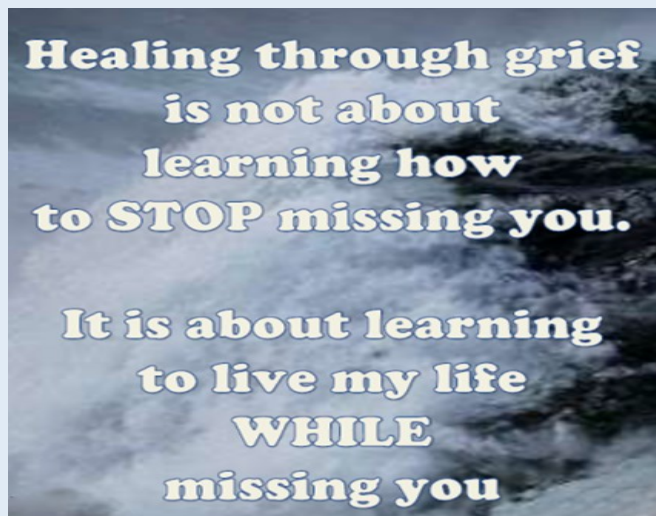
How to engage Task Four:

Finding a connection with your loved one as you move forward on your life journey.

- Stay emotionally connected to your loved one by:
 - Talking about him/her
 - Making sure he/she will always be remembered
 - Keeping a few tangible items as symbols of him/her
 - Memorializing
 - Attend church annual memorial service
 - Plant a tree in memory of your loved one
 - Develop meaningful rituals to mark special days (anniversaries, date of death, etc.)
- By embracing the overwhelming pain, we will eventually learn from it; then when we are ready, we can choose to find a way forward in life whilst integrating the love we feel for our loved one.
- After noticing that you are caught up in a wave of feelings, the next step is accepting that what you feel is what you feel. Then, instead of trying to resist what you are feeling, be kind to yourself in the midst of it.
- For example, on a day when you are struggling to get out of bed, you might be tempted to try to hide or change how you feel by sheer willpower. Or, maybe the strong wave of exhaustion is making you feel panicky and self-critical. Instead of beating yourself up, you might remind yourself that all these reactions are normal:

Always bear in mind that your journey does not come with a road map, or list of rules, yet there are suggestions for how to manoeuvre through your grief; therefore, we must walk through our grief, not around it.

Learning how to cope in this world without your loved one is not easy. You will always miss their presence and the joy they brought to your life. Remember that the journey is yours, as painful and stressful as it may be at times. Taking care of yourself and finding hope for your future is a great goal in honouring their memory



HELP!

Christian Counsellor:

If you need the support of a Christian counsellor, you can contact:

- Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC)

Visit the ACC website homepage www.acc-uk.org

Click on 'Find a Counsellor', then scroll down the page and enter your postcode for a list of counsellors in your area.

You could Telephone **024 7644 9694** and someone will guide you through the process.

Bereavement Support

- ✦ **Samaritans Helpline:**
08457 909090, 24 hours a day
- ✦ **Cruse Bereavement Care:**
0808 808 1677
- ✦ **Bereavement Trust Helpline:**
0800 435 455, from 6-10pm
- ✦ www.wntcg.org/bereavement
- ✦ www.wntcg.org/care