

Loss & Grief

“His delight is not in the strength of the horse, nor His pleasure in the legs of a man, but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His steadfast love (Psalm 147:10-11).”

There are certain times in our lives when we reflect on the events of life that have defined us—some good, some not so good but no matter what they are, they have been the game changers for us. I’ve had a lot of those in my life and I’ve learned to make sense of most of them and then put them away in the “over and done with” file in my mind. On occasion, something will come up that cracks that file open and like rubberneckers at a car wreck, I have to go back and take a look—even when good sense is telling me to slam that drawer shut and walk away. I still have to look and pick at that scab until it bleeds again. Even though I know I’d be better off not rehashing those things, it’s part of the grief process.

We grieve over the things we’ve lost in life even if we don’t realize it, and grief, while it lessens with time, never really stops. It’s an ongoing process that can come up at any time and if we don’t recognize it for what it is, we can experience waves of varied emotions from depression to anger. Learning to deal with grief is a lifelong process but first, we must recognize it for what it is and accept that we must go through the process to walk out the other side. Getting stuck in grief is not a good place to be and has its own consequences that can be terminal and lead to mental disorders, complete breakdowns, and suicide.

Elisabeth Kubler Ross defines the stages of grief as 1) denial 2) anger 3) bargaining 4) depression 5) acceptance. These stages help us put a name to what we are feeling when we experience loss, whether the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job, lifestyle, home, marriage, or anything that was part of who we are and what we believed defined us. There is no timeline for any of the stages, and often we feel more than one at a time. We can also go from one stage to another and then back again. There is no “order” or amount of time that is “normal” for any stage of the grieving process.

Sometimes, especially when things seem to be going well and we think we’ve got a handle on our emotions, and we’ve pulled ourselves through the going through, we can suddenly be pulled back into one, or more, of the stages of grief. A loss experienced by someone else, a date, a certain place, or even the wafting of a scent on the air can hurtle us back in time to our own place of grief.

We can suddenly be back in the grieving process, flooded with emotions we thought we had dealt with. Recognizing what we are feeling and why is important so we can walk through each emotion and be able to put it back into the “over and done with” file. This can take days or weeks, or even longer, but as long as we are processing the feelings and not getting stuck in them, we are on the right track.

It is important, whether it is you or someone you know, who is experiencing grief, to know how to help:

- 1) Acknowledge the reason for your emotions.
- 2) Talk to someone or be an active listener—advice is not always necessary or welcome but having someone really listen can be one of the greatest helps.
- 3) Don't isolate—being alone in your own mind can be a dangerous place to hang out. Being present for someone else can be all they need as well.
- 4) Understand that grieving can be a long process and there is no time limit on emotions, yours or someone else's.
- 5) Understand that grief emotions can come up at any time. There is no correlation between the amount of time since the loss occurred and the current emotions.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all com-fort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).”