

## FINDING PEACE IN GRIEF AND LOSS

This whole earth experience is one of constant change. Everything here has a beginning, middle, and an end. Relationships shift, careers end, friends move, a job is lost, possessions are gone, and people die. It happens all around us every single moment of the day. And even though these changes and losses are happening continuously, their impact may be unnoticed until they happen directly to us.

When someone we love dies, everything within us tilts off center. Suddenly there is a huge void where that person once lived in our personal world. We have to make many adjustments and we are affected on all levels – mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual.

When there's an unexpected loss of a significant person in our lives, or of a job, money, possessions, home, or position, or we experience some other dramatic shift in our life circumstances, we can feel lost, powerless, and abandoned.

Our reactions to the emotional pain of grief and loss may include yearning, frustration, crying, anger, guilt, anxiety, inability to focus, sudden sense of dread, and profound sadness.

**Grief is a whole-person kind of pain.  
We feel it in every fiber of our being.**

Just because the pain of grief is ignored and left unattended, it doesn't magically go away. It simply sits deeper and deeper inside us, sometimes erupting in self-abusive behaviors or in inappropriate responses toward others.

When we attend to our grief, on the other hand, when we acknowledge it and seek healing pathways through it, we open the door to new life

and to a sense of peace we may once have thought impossible to ever have again.

## **FIVE STEPS IN ATTENDING YOUR GRIEF**

### **1. Healing begins with acknowledging your pain.**

- You admit that things have changed and will likely never be quite the same again.
- You recognize how you are being affected by this change.
- You allow yourself to give voice to all your feelings, emotions, thoughts, and other reactions to this change.

At this point in the grieving process you need do nothing else. The acknowledging of your pain is itself a shift toward moving through it. The Course in Miracles says, *"It is enough to let the present be accepted as it is..."*

Even though a big part of you may be in rebellion against the loss you have experienced, another part of you, a deeper, steadier part of you stands in readiness to support your healing.

### **2. Healing continues with acknowledging how things have changed.**

Grief can sometimes dull your mental processes as you slip into a state of numbness and detachment. Please know that this response is a normal part of grieving. Stating and facing little by little the consequences of the loss you have just experienced can actually help you "thaw" a bit from that disconnection.

A loss of any kind brings with it both immediate and long-term changes to your life. Taking an honest look at those changes empowers you to make whatever new choices and decisions that might be required in order for you to eventually move forward.

### **3. Three questions to consider:**

- *What are the immediate changes from this loss that you can do something about right now?*
- *What are the immediate changes that you can defer - at least temporarily - to someone else's care?*
- *What are the long-term changes from this loss that will eventually need your attention?*

It can be very helpful to put your answers to these questions on paper. Get them out where you can look at them, make a list if that helps, and then consider who you can talk with about all these changes. Having another person's input can put a clearer perspective in front of you when you're in the fog of grief.

### **4. Reach out for all the support you need.**

This time of grieving is complicated and multi-dimensional, meaning that, as mentioned earlier, it affects you on every level of your being – mental, emotional, physical, spiritual and social. And since everyone processes loss differently, grief can also be *unpredictable*.

Expect to need some support along the way. Expect to need the help of loving friends and even trained professionals.

Asking for help is a sign of self-love and self-respect. It is self-loving when you see that you are struggling and realize you don't have to do it this way, you don't have to carry the burden of your loss alone. It is self-respectful to accept that you are worthy of any and all the help you need or want.

## 5. **Peace returns as you embrace your life differently.**

At some point in your journey through grief, facing the reality of this loss you've experienced will become more manageable. One step at a time you move from day to day as a new normal begins to emerge. Yes, you may still feel totally raw at times. Yet look back and see that you've somehow arrived at this new day. You made it this far and you can make it as far as you need to go today.

You are different in many ways because life has reshaped itself around your loss. You are stronger because you've made some progress in coming to terms with the way things are now. And whether you realize it yet or not, moving through your grief you are demonstrating your own inner resilience and courage.

Those qualities of resilience and courage will help you

- take care of loose ends,
- make new choices that better serve your life now,
- say the good-byes that need to be said,
- forgive what is still bothering you, and
- release and let go of the unchangeable past so you can move forward again.

*Let the good of the past companion you throughout your lifetime.  
Hold on to good memories as you assimilate the loss and see how  
even your grief has become a holy part of the tapestry of your life.*

*And let peace come again into your heart.*

*~ Louise Dunn ~*