

# Dealing With Grief

by Doreen Molloy

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When someone dies, our world changes in the most profound way. In the blink of an eye, we can find ourselves paralyzed with grief and unable to do even the most mundane tasks. Socializing and celebrating are no longer anywhere on the priority list; just getting through the day is an effort. Anyone who experiences grief on this level – especially when the loss is through death – can tell you just how painful it is; it seems that when your heart is broken, that pain is just as intense, and just as real, as any other physical pain. And when holidays come around, it feels like one more layer of sorrow is added, compounding and intensifying what you're already feeling.

In my work as a spiritual medium, I always strive to provide my clients with evidence of survival of consciousness, but I also try to remind people that it's not a good idea to seek out a medium too soon after someone dies - and here's why. Most of us need a little time to move through the initial phases of grief and be able to at least get back into the normality of daily activities. When you are in a state of intense grief, your ability to focus is clearly affected; this makes it much more difficult to concentrate on whatever information the medium might be sharing with you. It's usually best to wait at least a couple of months after losing a loved one before having a mediumistic session. Try to remember that most mediums would like nothing more than to help ease your grief by providing you with some evidence that our consciousness survives physical death. But you have to be open enough to receive it.

One of the most important things to understand is that grief is a normal and natural response to a loss of any kind. There are many different kinds of losses; although we seem to experience a different kind of "finality" with death, making it feel even more painful, more numbing, and at times, we will even experience conflicting emotions. We are usually ill-prepared to deal with grief, because most of us have learned incorrect (or inappropriate) ways of responding to loss events, instead of taking

specific actions that could help us to heal. As a result, we find that there is very little in our society that teaches us how to manage grief.

I spend a great deal of time reconnecting people with their loved ones in the afterlife, but over the years, I was also able to see that there was a need for further healing in the clients who came to see me. As a result, I wanted to find another way to help those who were experiencing various responses to grief. My quest led me to the local bookstore, where I found exactly what I was looking for. The first book I picked up looked very interesting. It was *The Grief Recovery Handbook* by John James and Russell Friedman, and once I began to read it, it didn't take me very long to realize that The Grief Recovery® Program was really different. I knew that I had to become certified in their program. And although the handbook can provide the reader with information, the workshop is where one finds the necessary skills to recover; this is where the real work takes place – and recovery begins. Through my training with The Grief Recovery Institute of California, I will share a few tidbits from the handbook with you ... followed by my own insights on how to manage grief.

One of the biggest mistakes people make when dealing with grief is thinking they can deal with it intellectually. But grief is about a broken heart, not a broken brain. All efforts to heal the heart with the head fail because the head is the wrong tool for the job. As they say in the handbook, "It's like trying to paint with a hammer – it only makes a mess." However, there are some things we can do, actions we can take, that could help us to cope with what we are feeling and at the same time, help us get on the road to recovery.

The first observation might be to understand what grief really is in order to better deal with it. Grief is about incompleteness; it is the result of many different kinds of loss events, most of which are usually life-changing. At the same time, it is one of the most misunderstood experiences, both for the griever and for the people around them. The death

of a loved one produces emotions that can be described as the feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there, only to find that when we need them one more time, they are no longer there.

To compound the problem, it is also very common to hear people say insensitive things to grievors. In most cases, they don't mean to be insensitive; they simply lack the skills and knowledge of what is appropriate or inappropriate to say. Most of us also grow up believing in many different "myths," thinking that they are in fact truths because they have been handed down, generation after generation. But those common myths are often the very things that keep us from healing. From *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, here are the six things we have all been taught – and every single one of them is incorrect:

1. Don't feel bad. Children are constantly told not to feel bad. We always tell our children, "Don't cry," which is another way of saying, "Don't feel the way you feel." It continues well into adulthood; you might have heard others comment about a break up in a relationship and say, "Don't feel bad. There's lots of other fish in the sea." This brings us to the next myth.

2. Replace the loss. How many of us lost a pet when we were children, only to be told by our parents, "We'll get you a new dog on the weekend." (As if this is going to make us forget our beloved old dog that we are missing terribly.) You cannot replace the loss of a relationship; you can have a new relationship or a different relationship, but there is no way to replace the original loss.

3. Grieve alone. Have you ever noticed how we are expected to be alone when we grieve? You'll hear things like, "Don't disturb your mother; she just needs a little time to be alone." or "He just needs a little space." Yet isolation is the worst thing in the world for a griever!

4. Just give it time. This myth is probably the most common. Everyone is familiar with the famous cliché, "Time heals all wounds." But the reality of it is that time doesn't heal any wounds, whether they're physical, mental, emotional or spiritual. Only by taking appropriate action can one create healing.

5. Be strong for others. This is one of the most confusing things we learn because we do not feel strong when we're grieving; we feel lousy. But we will hear things like, "You have to be strong for your mother." and clichés like, "You need to keep

a stiff upper lip." This myth forces people to suppress and stifle the emotions they are naturally feeling, making them feel even worse.

6. Keep busy. The bottom line is that no matter how busy you keep, at the end of the day you will still have an empty place in your heart when you have experienced a deep loss. "Busy-ness" does not repair emotional pain.

These are just a few of the things that grievors will learn to "forget" if they decide to participate in The Grief Recovery® Workshop. However, there are ways to complete our losses, and continue to remember the person if the loss is through death, so that we can move past the pain from the loss events and once again move on with our lives. But for the people who have not had the benefit of a program such as this, those six myths are powerful ones; and because they usually begin in childhood, they silently creep into our adult years and the cycle perpetuates. I personally believe that the handbook should be taught in all schools; this type of education (or re-education) would greatly benefit us as a society. To sum it up, the power in Grief Recovery is a result of taking new actions. It is an effective program which has the ability to help you to create a new future. If you would like further information about the program, the handbook or a workshop near you, you can contact The Grief Recovery Institute at [USA] 818-907-9600 or [Canada] 519-586-8825 or via the internet at <http://www.grief-recovery.com/index.html> which provides all the details of the program.

If you have lost someone during the past year, there are a few things you should consider doing differently. By taking certain actions in how you speak and what you do, the cumulative effect has the ability to make a real difference in the way you will feel. When someone we love dies, our lives will change in the blink of an eye. When that happens, we need to design our day differently and take some new actions that will help us to get through it.

The first thing to do is to be honest with others about how you really feel. Be authentic. How you speak to people is extremely important to your own healing. If someone asks you, "How are you feeling?" – tell them. Don't say, "I'm fine." when you are anything but fine. Don't worry if it makes them feel a little bit uncomfortable (after all, they may not know the best way to respond), because that should never stop you from being honest. We sometimes have this notion of feeling "We must do what's expected of us," but it is unrealistic for

anyone to expect a griever to be anything but sad and going through a vast array of emotions. Another common response for griever is to feel anger; after all, someone you love very much is no longer there. In other words, "They left you." Again, this can generate a variety of emotional responses, many of which are also connected to working on issues of forgiveness. So you need to share all of your feelings with the people you are closest to, honestly and openly.

The way you speak to yourself is equally important. Remember that the conversation you have with yourself will reinforce your emotional feelings, and ultimately, the outcome of your day. "Outward conversation" almost always includes speaking to your loved one, telling them how much you love them and miss them. It also very often includes speaking to a Divine Source (whatever the God of your understanding may be) and asking that your loved one is in Divine Light and is protected. This would be considered a form of prayer. Again, this type of outward conversation is a normal and natural response to grief. However it is the "inward conversation" that we forget to have that will assist us in our own healing.

The inward conversation is what we are saying to ourselves about what we feel; and we all know that the pain associated with grief does not feel good. But we can create a shift by changing that conversation through affirmations. Affirmations are positive statements about the present moment. They are assertions that are declared to be true and they have the ability to create something called Affirmative Healing. Affirmations (sometimes referred to as truth words) are statements said by the conscious mind, but they are aimed at the subconscious mind in order to bring those words of truth into being. They can be designed for any aspect of one's life, such as healing, harmony, health, abundance, etc. Just try to keep the statements short.

First, find a quiet, peaceful place at home where you can sit or lie down and take some deep cleansing breathes; make sure you are physically comfortable and as relaxed as possible. Here are a few examples of affirmations that might be said by griever, but you can also design some of your own:

- *I feel at peace in the knowledge that our bonds of love continue forever.*
- *I wake each morning feeling energized and refreshed.*
- *I am in harmony with the universe and all things are in balance.*

- *My spirit is a part of Divine Consciousness through which we are all connected.*

- *With each breath I take, I inhale the healing energy of the Earth and of Divine Power.*

If you decide to create some affirmations of your own, just remember to keep them positive and in the present tense. Never start with: I wish ... I want ... I need ... (That's future tense). Instead, start with things like: I am ... I feel ... I do ... (Keeping them in the present tense). Say your affirmations at least once a day and believe that you can manifest self-healing. It is the greatest gift you could ever give yourself.

You might also consider changing your routine. We are all creatures of habit, but when we experience a loss, some of those habits can often trigger a specific response in us, especially if our routine used to include someone who is no longer there. For instance, if the yearly ritual is to gather at Grandma's house every Thanksgiving, but you have lost someone close to you since the last family gathering, don't stay home alone, but think about going out for dinner instead. Or perhaps someone else can host. By doing this, you may be able to lessen the reminders that can result in feeling additional pain. You will still feel sad because that's a normal and natural reaction to loss, but hopefully, you will not feel as paralyzed by pain. So don't stay alone, but change the family tradition slightly.

There is another way to consider celebrating, especially if you do it differently and in a far more meaningful way. Here's what I mean... I have always told my family that when I die, I don't want them to mourn my death; I would much rather know that they are "celebrating my life." What a wonderful way to honor someone! Perhaps you could come together as a family, but instead of bringing gifts to share, bring memories that you can share. Ask everyone around the dinner table to recount a story about your loved one; the only catch is that it has to be a happy story, or better yet, a funny one. Those stories could provide you with a new foundation for memories, and by sharing them with each other everyone's memories continue to grow. All too often the last memory we have of someone is of them lying in a casket. Do you think they would want that? Or do you think they would prefer that we remember them with affection and laughter?

Another way to channel some of the pain you might be feeling would be to take an action that will honor your loved one in a specific way. Some

possibilities might be to donate time or some type of service in your loved one's name. Or if you're feeling up to it, you might consider helping another family who has experienced a loss similar to yours. And if you are computer savvy, think about putting up a web site to honor your loved one; it can include photos and stories and will most likely invite others to contribute to the site as well. This is a great way to keep someone's memory alive!

I recently did a mediumistic session for a family of five siblings. They were a close-knit and caring group and they shared with me a very unique way of keeping their Mom's memory alive. After their Mom passed away, they bought five sets of beautiful wind chimes, one for each of them. Then they had five special cups made to be hung from each of the chimes; each containing a little bit of their Mom's ashes. Now, whenever the air moves and the chimes gently sing, they said it's as if their Mom is speaking to them. What a wonderful and loving gift, and quite creative, I might add.

Meanwhile, please try to remember that even by making any of the simple changes suggested here, you will still be grieving because grief is the normal and natural response to loss. But hopefully, by taking some new actions, it will help to ease your pain slightly. We all know that "There is no magic pill" to get us through the grief process, but we can do certain things to help us cope better and promote self-healing. And always remember that just because you choose to move on with life, none of the above suggestions or actions will ever make you forget your loved one; nothing could ever do that. Bonds of love are forever, and crossing over does not diminish that connection in any way.

May you be blessed with Peace, Healing, Love and Light.

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Doreen Molloy, author of *Proof Positive - Metaphysical Wisdom*, was Lab Certified through the University of Arizona as a research medium and is also a Grief Recovery Specialist. She is available for private readings, by appointment only, in person or by phone, as well as for E-readings and Family sessions. Phone: 201-325-9103, Email: [doreen@doreenmolloy.com](mailto:doreen@doreenmolloy.com), Web Site: [www.doreenmolloy.com](http://www.doreenmolloy.com)