

“Are we there yet?!” Navigating the Journey of Grief and Loss

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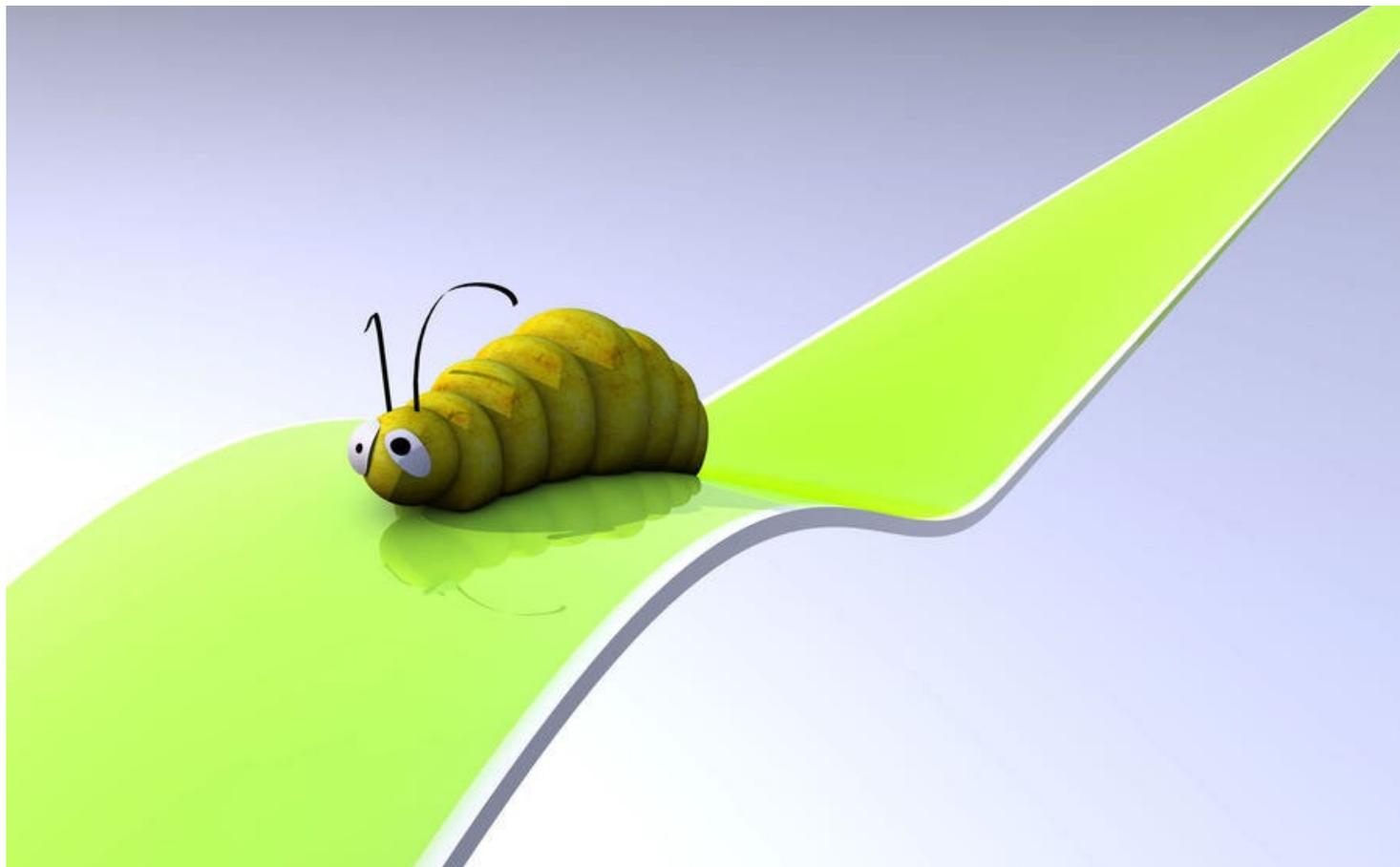


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Are we there yet?



Grief and Loss

- What is Grief?
- Common Symptoms
- Grieving Process
- Common Misconceptions
- Coping with Grief
- Seeking Help
- Complicated Grief
- Questions

What is Grief?



What is Grief?



- “Grief is a natural reaction to loss or change” (ACA, 2021).
- “...a reaction to the loss of anyone or anything an individual is attached to deeply” (Meyers, 2016).
- “...a normal, natural, and necessary process of healing following a personal and significant loss...” (victimrelief, 2021).
- Universal but extremely personal (Smith, Robinson, and Segal, 2020).
- “emotion, generated by an experience of loss and characterized by sorrow and/or distress and the personal and interpersonal experience of loss” (Humphrey, 2009, p.5).

Various Losses



- Death
 - Loved one
 - Miscarriage
 - Pet
- Loss of relationship
 - Divorce
 - Friendship
 - Family
- Loss of health
 - Own
 - Other
- Loss of a dream
- Loss of home
 - Planned or unplanned
- Loss of safety
 - After trauma
- Loss of freedom
- Loss of job
- Loss of stability
 - Moving
- Loss associated with COVID-19



Common Symptoms

What does grief look like?



In grief there must be room
— for healing's sake —
for grief to be expressed.

Ways Grief Can Affect Us



- **Physical**
 - Within the body (pain, nausea, diarrhea, headache, fatigue, etc.)
- **Emotional**
 - Feelings (Denial, sadness, anger, despair, fear, etc.)
- **Mental**
 - Thinking (Difficulty concentrating, forgetting, confusion)
- **Behavioral**
 - Sleep, appetite, irritability
- **Social**
 - Withdrawing from family and friends, pressure to be strong
- **Spiritual**
 - Questioning/doubting faith

The weight of grief.

This amazing artist (Celeste Roberge) found a way to convey the physical feeling of grief.

| TheMindsJournal



The Grieving Process



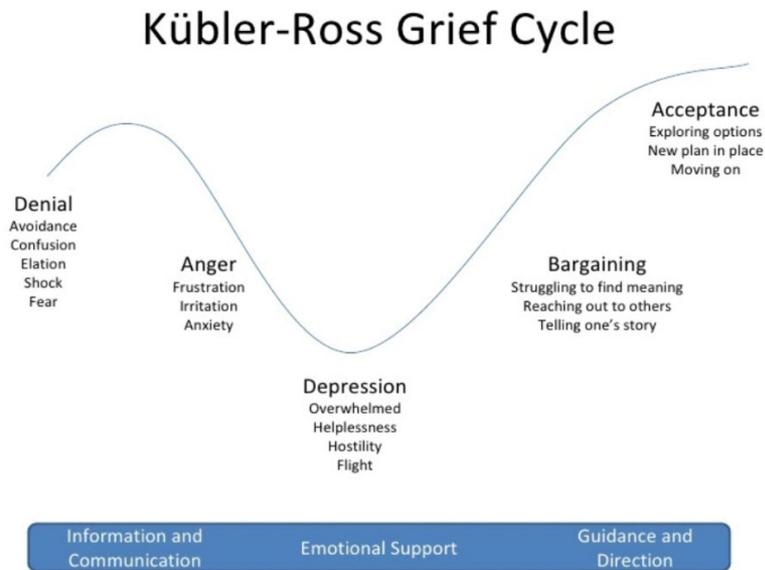
A Unique Journey

The Grieving Process



- Every person grieves in a unique way
- No one person grieves the same
- Grief can feel like a solitary process
- Give oneself permission to grieve
- Can feel like a roller coaster
- Tangled ball of emotions
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve
- Depends on one's individuality
- Takes time
- No normal time table
- Allow the process
- Be patient
- Acknowledge the pain
- Expect the unexpected

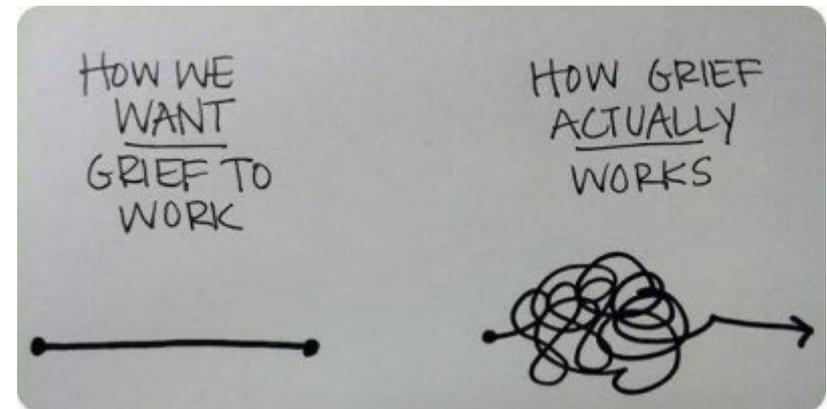
Stages of Grief



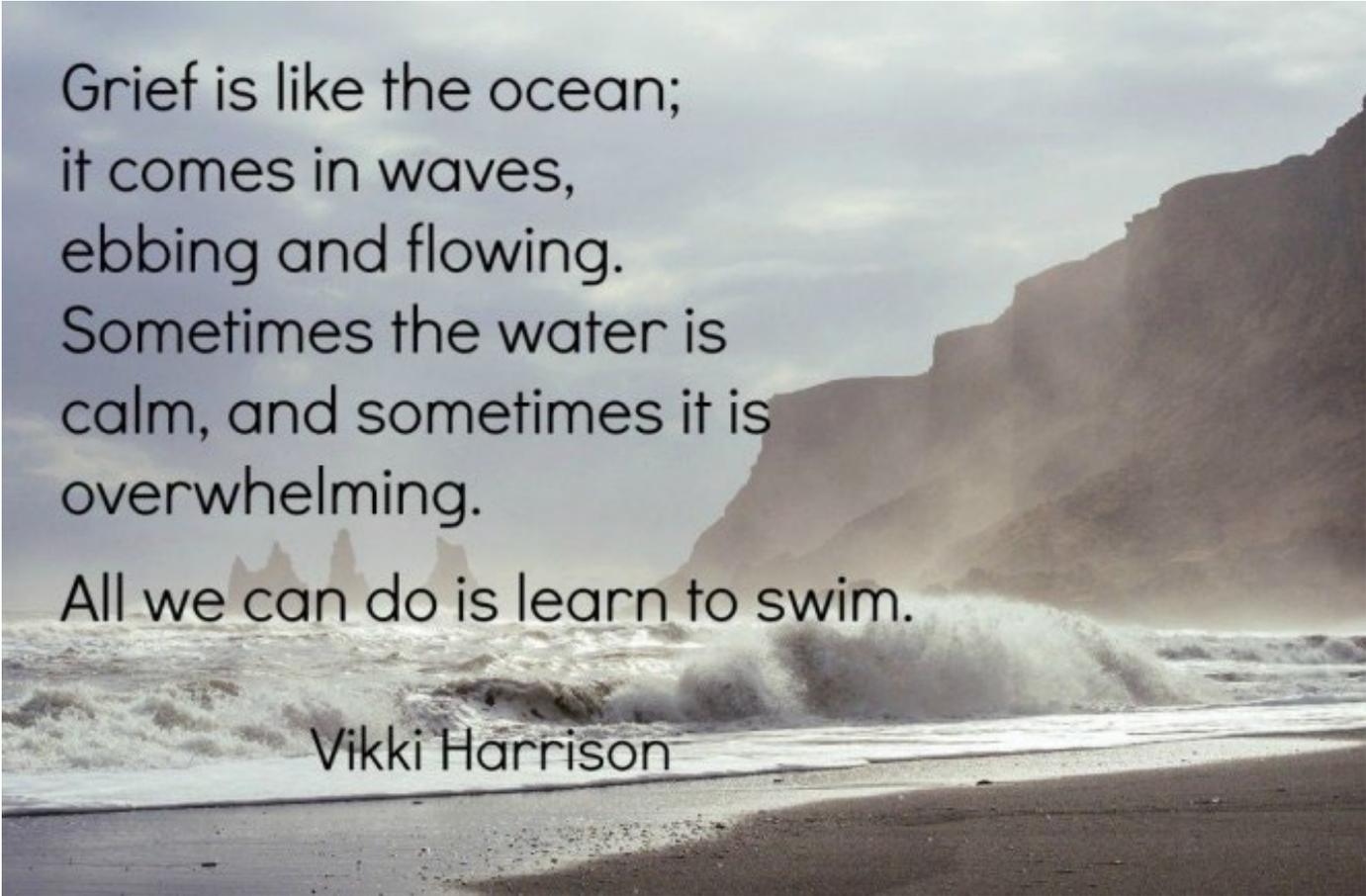
- The stages “...were never meant to help tuck messy emotions into neat packages. They are responses to loss that many people have, but there is not a typical response to loss, as there is no typical loss. Our grieving is as individual as our lives” (Kubler Ross, 2004).

Process versus Stages

- “We’ve gone beyond the idea of ‘stages.’ We really see grief as a unique process for each individual” (Meyers, 2016).
- “Grief does not move smoothly and predictably through a series of predetermined stages. In reality, it is a process that follows a different course for each individual” (Meyers, 2016).



The Grieving Process



Grief is like the ocean;
it comes in waves,
ebbing and flowing.
Sometimes the water is
calm, and sometimes it is
overwhelming.
All we can do is learn to swim.

Vikki Harrison

grief attacks

We can be going along and everything seems to be okay.

Then, out of nowhere, grief hits full force.

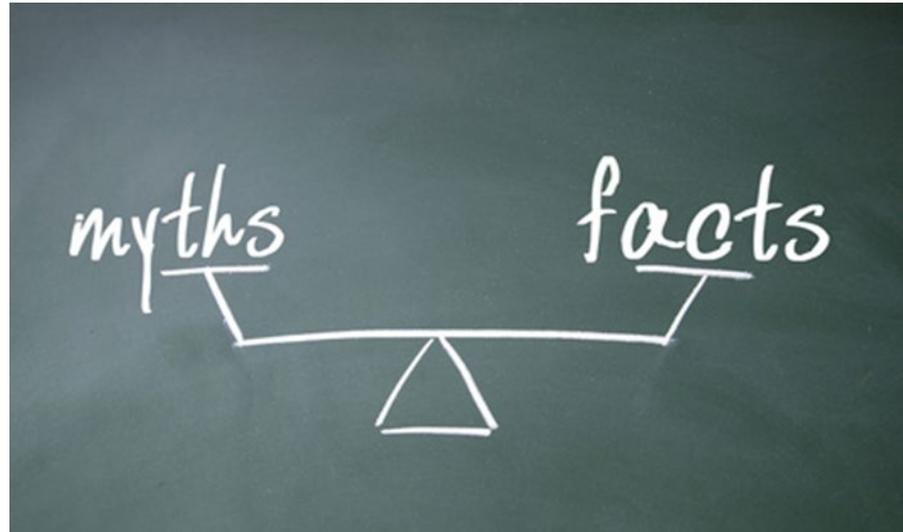
These are not set backs.

They are simply a part of the grieving experience.

-Unknown

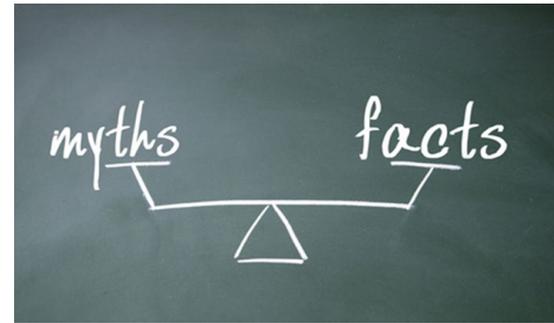
NotSoMommy.com

Common Misconceptions



Myth vs Fact

(Smith, Robinson, and Segal, 2020)



- Myth: If you don't cry, it means you aren't sorry about the loss.
 - Fact: Crying is a normal response to sadness, but it's not the only one. Those who don't cry may feel the pain just as deeply as others. They may simply have other ways of showing it.
- Myth: Grieving should last about a year.
 - Fact: There is no specific time frame for grieving. How long it takes differs from person to person.

Myth vs Fact

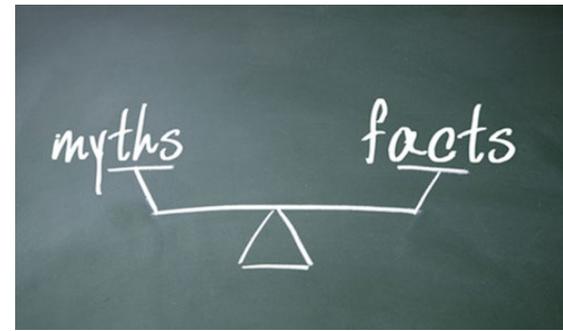
(Smith, Robinson, and Segal, 2020)



- Myth: Moving on with your life means forgetting about your loss.
 - Fact: Moving on means you've accepted your loss—but that's not the same as forgetting. You can move on with your life and keep the memory of someone or something you lost as an important part of you. In fact, as we move through life, these memories can become more and more integral to defining the people we are.

Myth vs Fact

(Smith, Robinson, and Segal, 2020)



- Myth: The pain will go away faster if you ignore it
 - Fact: Trying to ignore your pain or keep it from surfacing will only make it worse in the long run. For real healing, it is necessary to face your grief and actively deal with it.
- Myth: It's important to “be strong” in the face of loss.
 - Fact: Feeling sad, frightened, or lonely is a normal reaction to loss. Crying doesn't mean you are weak. You don't need to “protect” your family or friends by putting on a brave front. Showing your true feelings can help them and you.

Coping with Grief



Coping with Grief

(Hayley, 2016)

- Recognize that no set of steps, tasks, stages, or method could ever tell you how to get over, move on from, let go of, or resolve grief.
 - It's complicated and ongoing.
- Recognize that life will never be exactly the same.
 - Pre loss/post loss
- Train your brain, body, and heart to tolerate pain.
 - Do not suppress or avoid.
 - Use ways to relax, be mindful, express, expect.



Coping with Grief

(Hayley, 2016)

- Learn from the tough stuff. Throw away the bad stuff. Hold onto the good stuff.
- Keep living life one day at a time.
 - One foot in front of the other
 - Survive until you can thrive
- Let people help you.
 - Ask and accept.
- Find ways to keep your loved one in your life.
 - Rituals, memories, etc.
- Repeat indefinitely.



Coping Skills



- Physical
 - Take care of your physical health
- Emotional
 - Express and release feelings
- Mental
 - Talk about/remember loved one
 - Accept loss
 - Read helpful books/educate to normalize
- Behavioral
 - Engage in healthy habits: sleeping, eating, hydrating, exercising
- Social
 - Reach out to family and friends
 - Join support group
- Spiritual
 - Reach out to spiritual leader
 - Allow self to ask difficult questions

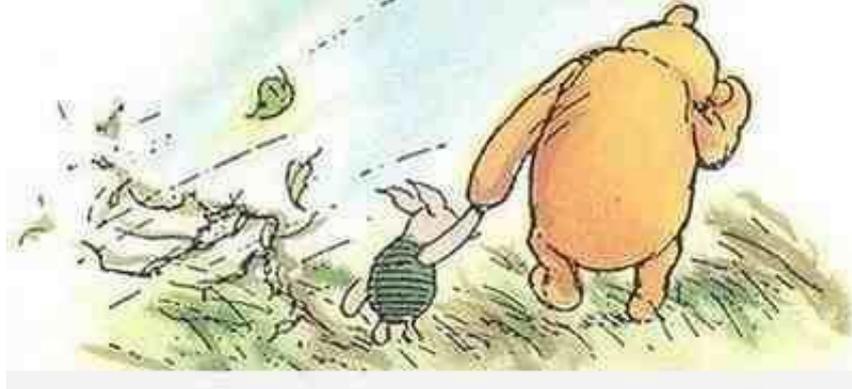
Tasks in Grieving

(Worden, 2009)



- 1) Accept the loss.
 - Reality of death
- 2) Process the pain of grief.
 - Work through
- 3) Adjust without the deceased.
 - External: life/world without him/her
 - Internal: who one is without him/her
 - Spiritual: how has understanding of world changed
- 4) Live effectively in the world by finding a place for the deceased in your emotional life.
 - Ways to remember loved one without getting in way

“If there ever comes a day when we
can't be together, keep me in your
heart, I'll stay there forever.”
- Winnie the Pooh



Seeking Help



When to seek help

- Significant distress
- Intense grief and problems in functioning
- Sleep difficulties
- Suicidal thoughts and behavior
- Increased use of substances
- Problems in relationships
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD



Complicated Grief



Complicated Grief

(Daneker & Aiello, 2021)



- Debilitating clinical condition
- Can occur in various grief situations
- Person gets “stuck” in the grieving process
- Approximately 10 to 15 % of bereaved individuals develop complicated grief
 - intense yearning for the lost loved one
 - Intrusive and troubling images or thoughts of the death
 - feelings of inner emptiness
 - difficulty accepting the reality of the loss
 - difficulty trusting others

Complicated Grief

Symptom domain	Criteria
Separation distress	<p>The patient has ≥ 1 of the following 4 symptoms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Persistent, intense yearning or longing for the deceased 2) Frequent feelings of intense loneliness or emptiness 3) Recurrent negative thoughts about life without the deceased or recurrent urge to join the deceased 4) Preoccupying thoughts about the deceased that impair daily functioning
Thoughts Feelings Behaviors	<p>The patient has ≥ 2 of the following 8 symptoms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Rumination about circumstances of the death 2) Frequent disbelief or inability to accept the death 3) Persistent feeling of being shocked, stunned or emotionally numb since the death 4) Recurrent feelings of anger or bitterness regarding the death 5) Difficulty trusting or caring about others since the loss 6) Experiencing pain or other somatic symptoms that the deceased person had, hearing the voice of the deceased or seeing the deceased person 7) Intense emotional reactions to memories of the deceased 8) Excessive avoidance or excessive preoccupation with places, people and things related to the deceased or death

Questions?