

Finding Meaning In Our Grief Journey

Eventually everyone must grieve the death of someone we have loved. It may be one of the hardest tasks that we have ever have to do. We can do it well, or we can do it poorly. We cannot escape the task. Death happens.

It is more than a metaphor to say that people grow on us. Psychologically that is exactly what happens. We become attached to people and when they die it is as tho a part of us has been ripped away. It hurts. Healthy grieving allows us to heal and to form new attachments.

Healthy grieving can strengthen families and communities. We are all human. We can share each others' grief. There is strength in numbers. We can find support within our families and communities, and, in turn, we can give support to those in need. We can remember the one who has died in our own way and in a way that gives meaning. We can acknowledge a host of conflicting emotions that often goes along with grieving. We can be secure in the knowledge that with the support of others we will complete this grieving task, difficult as it may be, and we will resolve to continue on with a life that still has beauty and meaning.

Some people have found support groups to be helpful. Here they may connect with others who have experienced similar feelings and thoughts. Group members are gently encouraged to talk about the person who died as much and as often as they like. You need not do this alone.

A good support group will have many of the characteristics of a good counsellor. They will acknowledge that every person's grief is unique as every individual is unique. They will understand that grief is a normal process without any specific time table. Group members will respect any individual's right not to talk if they feel they just need to listen. Thoughts and feelings are respected; there are no "right" or "wrong" feelings; they just happen. Group members listen with empathy and don't give advice unless it is asked for. Confidentiality is respected. What is said in the group stays in the group.

Your primary support in grieving is your family and close friends. If you assess yourself and find that you need more you may seek out a qualified counsellor or a good support group. Here are some things to look for when assessing your self in your grief journey:

1. Have you acknowledged the reality of the death? Sometimes people become stuck in their grieving by refusing to think about it and by caring on as tho nothing has changed.
2. Have you developed a new relationship with the person your memory and you can embrace those memories, both happy and sad.
3. Have you created new relationships with the living? The purpose of grieving is to allow us to reweave our web of caring that surrounds us. Things have changed and that necessitates changes to our relationships.
4. Have you continued to receive support from family and friends? You will never forget the one you love and you do not want to. The support you need will be less intense and less frequent, but the memories will always be there.