

Good Grief REALLY!

Learning to mourn
with those that
mourn and comfort
those that stand in
need of comfort.



**To learn more about grief and grieving and the Pathway
Through Grief, GoTo –**

www.PathwayThroughGrief.com

Good Grief – REALLY? Yes Really.

What is grief?



No one ever told me that
grief felt so much like fear.
I am not afraid, but the sensation is
like being afraid. The same fluttering
in the stomach, the same
relentlessness, the yawning.

I keep swallowing.

A Grief Observed

C.S. Lewis, 1961

To begin, let's look at what grief is. Understanding the "what" and "why" can assist us in comprehending the "how" - **Our how**. Not some prescribed process and steps or stages, but our unique and personal process.

C.S. Lewis really put a finger on the pulse of grief in his statement above. Grief and grieving really does feel a lot like fear. In fact, there is a lot of fear involved in grieving.

When our foundation is rocked, like a building in an earthquake, we begin to shake and tremble. We seek any possible security we can find. The physiological and emotional reaction to loss, is exactly the same. We seek safety. Without it we are afraid.

Attachment is a major part of life. Our attachments make up our secure base and sure footing in life. The more attached we are to something, someone, a vision, or even a dream, the more fear we will have when we lose it. Our secure base is shaken and we do not know where to find safe haven.

If you are helping someone in the throes of grief, one of the best things you can do is help them feel safe haven in you. Our role is to help them find a sure footing again.

When we experience a loss in any one of the 4 categories I will explain later, our safe haven and secure base attachments to life are rocked.

Our emotions cloud the logic part of the brain and we feel lost, alone, afraid, and often confused as to where we are to turn. The future begins to look very bleak and that is hard to endure. Living for the moment is sometimes the best we can do.

As we lose our ability to see and perceive what is coming or where we will go next, our security and footing weakens. Our safe have isn't as safe and fear is often the most common outcome.

I once worked with a women who was dealing with the loss of her marriage. The questions that filled our sessions were . . .

“Who am I now?”,

“What do I do?”

“Will I ever know love?”

These were all part of the confusion and fear that filled her life and our conversations. Sarah's firm grounding in the secure base of her relationship and in the vision and dream of the future life they would have together was over. The relationship she had was rocking at its base and that turmoil was causing major distress and chaos.

Fear really is very much a part of what grief is.

While working with a couple

who had just lost a child, I found them dealing with two very different grieving styles. This difference was causing a significant hardship in the home and also a considerable amount of secondary grief in the relationship.

Because the couple were experiencing the loss in totally different ways, they began feeling that they did not understand each other or that they could come to each other for support, they were having issues of loss inside their marriage as well.



Contrary to popular psychology and media portrayals, there is no one way, right way, to grieve.

The mother of my couple had been very, very close to the child. They were always together on adventures and play.

The father was caring and supportive, but definitely not the favorite parent.

As a result of the different relationships, each parent was grieving an entirely different loss. They both had lost a child yes, but that child was something very different to each of them.

Dad lost his child, part of him, part of his identity as a father. Mom lost a child as well, but she also lost her playmate, companion, buddy, and friend. Each also lost the vision, the dream of what the coming years were going to look like moving forward.

Part of the conflict about how to grieve was that dad wanted to memorialize the child and create what mom felt was a shrine.

This elaborate display of the child's life created deep pain for the mother. She could not pass by the memorial without it dredging up the deep pain she was feeling. While the memorial was a way to soothe and bargain the pain for him, it was like a dagger for her.

Mom wanted to just put it all away and not look at anything. Withdrawal and isolation are powerful salves on the wound of loss.

Each of these heartbroken parents were wrestling with guilt that is so common in unexpected loss. "If this", "because that", "if only" repeatedly start conversations.

The reality was, nothing was going to alter the events that led to this tragedy. No amount of hoping or replaying the circumstances will change the reality.

In many ways, they were each trying to own responsibility where none was to be had.

The hard reality was that it was an accident. There was no way to foresee it, and in the end there was nothing that could have been done to have prevented it. Those are hard words to hear though, when you are trying to find anything you possibly can to make sense of the loss, stop the chaos, and end the nightmare.

Perhaps you can relate. Maybe you too have struggled to make sense of the emotional and psychological whirlwind that grief creates.

Maybe, like other clients I've had - and even myself - you have been frustrated by the notion that grief is supposed to be a smooth, fluid, linear process as we step through the "stages" and the "tasks" of grief, only to discover that there is no fluid linear straight-line process.

Worst yet, for some, is the insistence of others around them that you should just "Get Over It". "Move On", "put it away", or they question how long it is going to take you. The reality is, these are merely comments of their own grief and lack of understanding that we never fully "move on". Even harder is when someone insists you are "doing it wrong".

Your grief triggers their unresolved loss or their helplessness in knowing how to help you.

That is why I have taken my 20+ years of working with grieving and loss and created this eBook [Good Grief – Really?](#), and the Becoming a Loss Manager coaching program and support community.

I believe it is time that grief be understood and that there needs to be a safe and understanding community where you can work your way to becoming a loss manager.

Grief Defined

“Good Grief!”

“That was a traumatic!”

“What a loss!”

We use grief and loss so routine in our conversation it can seem mundane, but there is nothing mundane or routine about it.

The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology captured in this definition.

“An intense emotional state associated with the loss of someone (or something) with whom (or which) one has had a deep bond. Not used as a synonym for depression.”

The Penguin Dictionary
of Psychology

This intense emotional reaction to loss is exactly what causes us the fear that Lewis expressed.

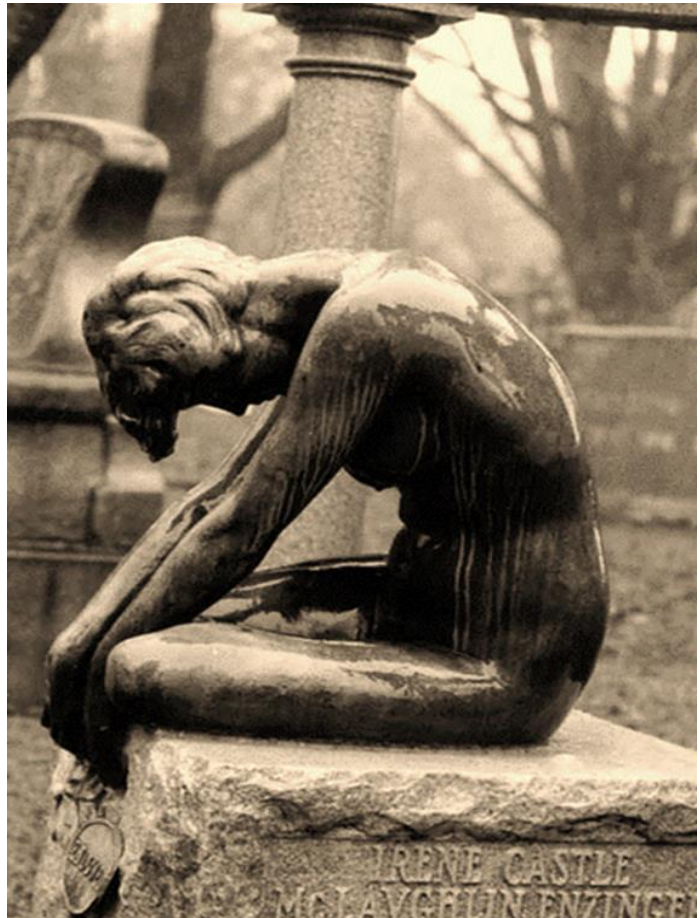
Whenever we are afraid, there will always be an intense emotional state. Our reactive self-preservation part of the brain dictates this. As I will show you in later, the logical brain actually shuts down in a major loss moment.

Our attachment foundation is so important that when it cracks, we feel it through our entire life. This stirs up massive emotional reactions. It displaces our understanding of reality and leaves us in an emotional state.

An important note here is the statement - “Not to be used as a synonym for depression.” This is so true.

Yes, depression is a symptom and by product of grief, but the two are not the same.

Depression is a temporary coping mechanism that is part of the bargaining and coping process. It grows out of the pressure and turbulence brought on from loss.



The mental exhaustion of balancing and managing all those emotions can leave us feeling depressed. Like the body does after a long physical activity. At one point, we just collapse.

The American Heritage Dictionary has a very circular take on what grief is. I like it for both its comedy and it's mirroring of what it feels like to be in the throes of loss.

“Deep mental anguish as that arising from bereavement, a source of deep mental anguish.”

American Heritage Dictionary

Deep mental anguish that comes from bereavement, which happens to be a source of . . . deep mental anguish.



Grief is an **intense emotional** experience with **psychological, emotional,** and **physiological** components that converge to create a **behavioral** outcome.

Brett M. Judd LMSW

My grieving couple who lost their child were experiencing the intense emotional and psychological pain, but neither were ready for the physical pain and illness that is so often associated after a significant loss.

Loss impacts us at every level of our being.

Many people experience physical sickness in the aftermath of loss. It is often what I have heard referred to as the post loss flu.

Following a loss, our behaviors will change, our activities and interests will shift, even if just for a brief time. Part of the grieving process is to allow ourselves and the griever to shift and change to accommodate their new life. Their Life With Loss.

This shift in those close to us when they grieve is hard because it can trigger a secondary loss for us.

What Grief Feels Like



I have not found a better description of the loss experience than that of the snow globe.

When we are hit with a loss, the snow around us begins to swirl in random abandon. The pieces of our life are tossed and churned never seeming to land in the same place again – if at all.

The great proverb 29:18 – “Where there is no vision, the people perish” has no greater application than in the aftermath of loss.

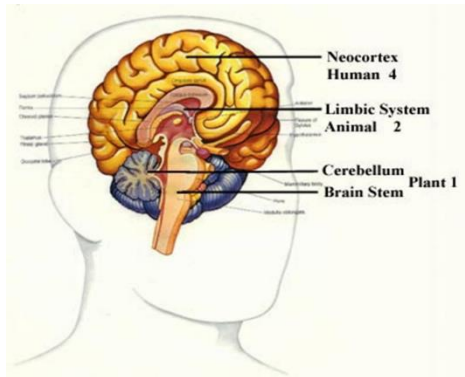
When the turmoil swirls the “snow” of life – all the things that make up our secure base - we are for a time lost with no vision and no hope of what is to come.

When we lose sight of our future, there is no hope. No potential.

Until the swirling stops and the pieces settle, there is little that we can do but to wait for the quiet to come.

“Have I lost my mind? It feels like I am going crazy”

A more common phrase in the conversation of grief is likely not to be found than then “Am I crazy?”. It can truly feel like we have lost our mind. In some ways, perhaps we have.



A neuroscientist might be cringing at this simplistic breakdown of the brain, but it will work well for this discussion.

Simply put, there are three distinct areas of the brain, each with its own specific function.

All higher order functioning – scheduling, sequence, task completion, and decision making are handled by the

Neocortex.

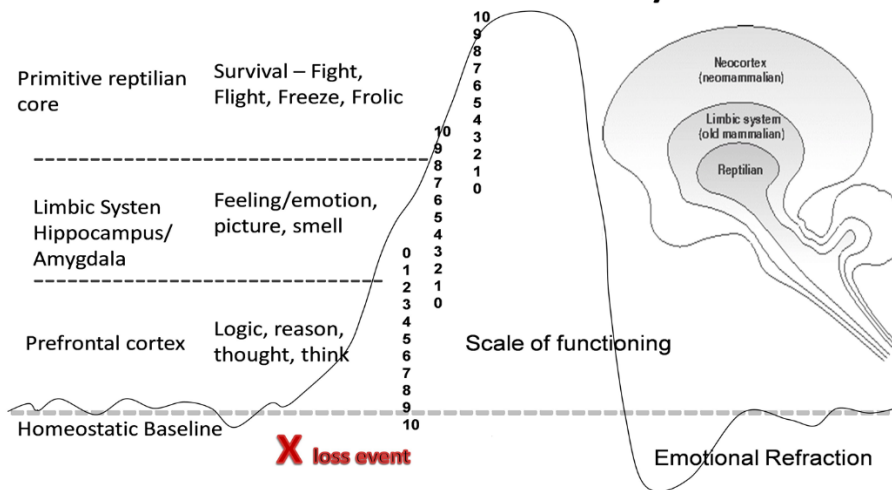
Our reactive/emotion based brain is the Limbic or mid brain.

Finally – there is the Primitive brain – the reptilian core. Its sole function is to see that we survive. This is where the Fight/Flight and freeze response live.

Dr. Peter Levine and Dr. Robert Scaer both observed that when we are faced with a traumatic or overwhelming reality, the cognitive, logical portion of the brain actually stops working for a moment. We are spun into a Survival Brain response to anticipated, real, or imagined fear.

It Triggers the arousal of emotional awareness and self-protection.

Emotional Arousal Cycle



When we are first presented with the news of the loss, the limbic brain overrides the logic brain and sends us into an emotional arousal. If this strong enough, or we feel alone and afraid enough, we can quickly find ourselves in a survival state.

As one who is providing care and nurture, it is important to understand that in an emotional state, there is no logic and reasoning that is going to happen. You must join them in the state that they are. If they are emotional, reflect the emotion and hear them, be with them, share your own emotions. If they have progressed to survival, make them as safe as possible so that they can begin to calm.

This truly is the essence of the phrase – “mourn with those that mourn. Comfort those that stand the need of comfort.”



“Thank you for teaching me about the real process of grief. I was able to mourn with a co-worker. It was great to not feel lost. I knew what to say and how to help her. It felt really nice. Thank you”

Dan Deakin

Reflection Moment

Take a minute and write about the ways you are currently experiencing grief.

Mental

Emotional

Physical

How long have you been grieving?

Now that we have a strong foundation of what grief is, let's discuss what it is not.

What Grief Is NOT . . .

- ~ a finite series of stages or tasks to be completed.
- ~ a process that is identical to the way someone else experienced it.
- ~ something that you will ever fully “accept and get over”.
- ~ part of life any of us can escape.

What Dan told me as we discussed grieving is that he had never understood how to respond or assist another person, let alone himself.

He spoke about the Stages and how that seemed to actually cause more grief. And he was right.

Grieving Frameworks and Theories

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross 5 Stages of Grief

Probably the most classic – as far as popular theories go – the 5 stages concept of grief has caused an amazing amount of grief all on its own.



Most of us have all heard about the Stages idea of grieving. It is everywhere. Pop culture, movies, goofy YouTube videos, even a Simpson episode have all worked tirelessly to engrain the notion that there are 5 distinct and clean stages that we go through.

I wish it was this simple.

For a quick review and reference, let's look at what Kubler-Ross started when she gave us the stages of grief in her book *On Death and Dying*.

Kubler –Ross came up with her “stages” model while working with terminally ill patients. She was watching people in their final days of life reconcile the coming end.

She observed that people who were coming to terms with their mortality passed through 5 stages – Denial, Anger, Depression, Bargaining, and finally acceptance.

Truly, she discovered distinct parts of the grieving process. While the stages idea has caused many a lot of grief, the language is spot on and we will use it again.

The problem that the “stages” concept has is that it gives the notion of a clean fluid process, much like a recipe or formula. The reality is we do not move through each of the stages in a fluid and staged manner.

I have had numerous clients who were distraught, some angry, that they were again experiencing a “stage” they had already completed. Many have also struggled with the idea of acceptance. When you are the one looking at your own mortality, it is easier to accept this than it is for us who remain and must become Loss Managers with a Life With Loss.

Those of us left with the loss after a death, or some other loss, most come to an acceptance of a new future, not the end. We are accepting that we will carry with us the remnant of the loss.



Another theory that plays on the notion of distinct stages, or in this case Tasks, makes it look as there we can simply make a to do list and to work.

Very possible if we were in our full logic brain, but as I stated earlier we are functioning with limited logical capacity until we begin to move through the loss and the Emotional Abyss.

Any attempt to logically move through tasks will only overwhelm the logic brain, activate the emotional limbic, and send us into an emotional spiral. The Task model might be best suited for the care giver as a check list of things that they can watch for and assist with- when the time is right.

Worden's Tasks are . . .



1. **To accept the reality of the Loss:** this means knowing that the deceased person is no longer alive and won't be part of our everyday lives.

2. **To accept the reality of the Loss:** this means knowing that the deceased person is no longer alive and won't be part of our everyday lives.

3. **To adjust to the new environment** where the deceased person is missing: this is the part where we struggle with all of the changes that happen as a result of the person being gone- including all of the practical parts of daily living (eg: more responsibilities at home if it is a parent who died) and all of the effects their loss has upon our sense of who we are and how we see the world (eg: suddenly feeling like "Life is not fair" or being frustrated with friends who "don't understand us anymore").

4. **Emotionally relocate the deceased and move on.** To reinvest energy in life, loosen ties to the deceased and forge a new type of relationship with them based on memory, spirit and love: This means that we begin to acknowledge the value of the relationship we had with the person who died and everything we may have learned or loved or respected or disagreed with about them. We recognize that we don't need to 'forget' them and that it is okay to care and connect with other people and continue to live our lives even though we miss them.

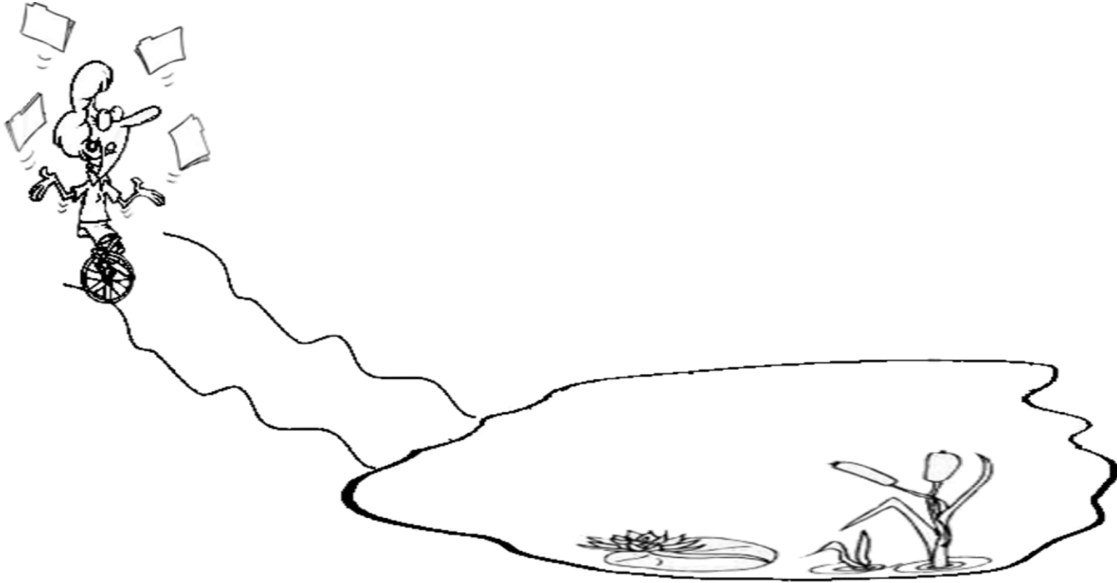
Reflection moment.

How have you been frustrated by the Stages idea of grief and grieving?

How have you felt you had completed a stage only to find yourself back in it?

In what way is grief more like roller-coaster than a stage stop?

Pathway Through Grieving — To become a Loss Manager.



Grieving is neither task driven or stages. It is a process, a flow. Just like our emotional river that flows through us from the day we are born, grief has a flow. In reality, grief is a storm surge that can overwhelm our emotional flow and create havoc in our lives.

Grief is a life changing and perspective altering transformation from griever to Loss Manager - one who is now living with loss. Managing that loss. Understanding and recognizing the impact of the loss. A Loss Manager is one who has come to terms with and embraced their new life.

At the end of the path is not a magical moment when it all goes away, but an awakening to who you have become and the strength you have gained along the way.

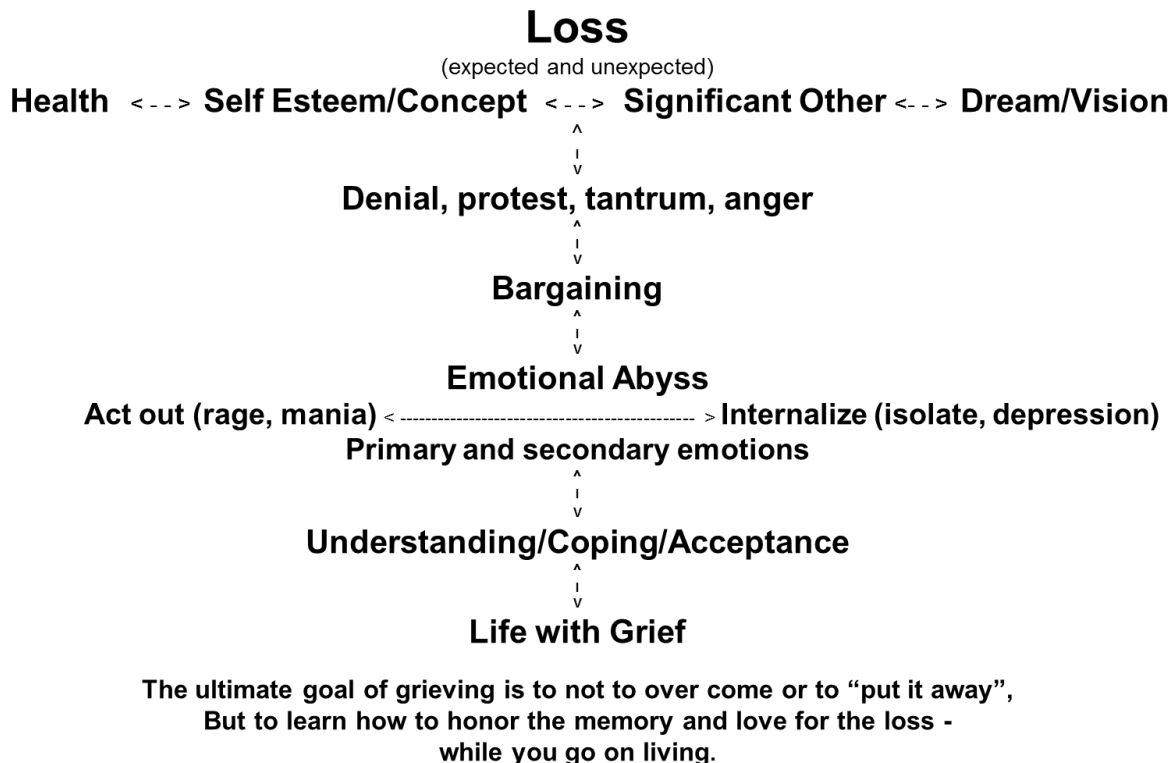
Grief is part of life and it is so universal that every culture around the world experiences it. What is not so universal is the process that each of will go through and what we will gain in moving along that pathway.

In our own way, each and every one of us are Loss Managers and are experiencing a Life With Loss.

So if there aren't stages, and we don't have clearly defined tasks, and if it is uniquely individual – what are we to do? How in the world are we supposed to help others mourn and deal with our own loss without a clean and concise roadmap?

This is where the Pathway To Becoming a Loss Manager fills the gap. Let me show you how you too can say Good Grief! Because grief really is good.

Pathway Through Grieving



To become a Loss Manager.

To start, let's look at what loss really is, how it impacts us, and why we get so trapped in the messy middle of bargaining and the emotional abyss.

First – loss happens to all of us in one of two ways, and in 4 distinct areas.

When we experience a loss, it is either –

expected/anticipated, or **unexpected**/traumatic.

In my Sr. Year of high school, my wrestling coach died suddenly. None of us knew that he had a terminal heart issue and that he could die at any minute. He lived life to the fullest with no reservation. Coach touched my life in so many ways that when I heard about the loss, I was seriously spun. It came from so far off my radar that there was no way to have prepared for it. It was truly unexpected.

Contrast this to the death of my grandfather. He had battled cancer for 4 years. In that time I was blessed to reconnect with him and to spend many hours by his side after I took care of his lawn. His death was not a shock. It was very expected. In reality, when it happened I was deeply relieved because it had become so hard to see him in the state he was. I had had 4 years to move down the path and become a Loss Manager and embrace the life without him.

“One of the greatest losses in life is that in general we do not allow for the expression of emotion”

The 4 types of loss.

Loss will fall into 4 distinct areas.

Unlike the way that loss happens – expected or unexpected, the type of loss is not mutually exclusive.

These bleed over to each other and create simultaneous losses. This is where loss becomes very individual. There is no two identical loss experience even in the same household or event.



(expected and unexpected)

Health < - - > Self Esteem/Concept < - - > Significant Other < - - > Dream/Vision

Loss if health is one that we can all anticipate. We know that we will grow old, that our bodies will fail us, and that we will in time lose our physical health. That said, there are those unexpected times when we are caught off-guard by an illness or accident.

Self-Concept/Esteem is tied closely to health and the other 3 losses. Self-concept is what we think about or how we see ourselves.

Earlier I mentioned Sarah, a client I had who was processing the loss of her marriage. One of the biggest issues that we had to face was not the loss of her husband and marriage as she had ruled that dead long before, but it was her identity. “Who am I?” she asked. Up to this point in her adult life she was Mrs., a wife, a married women. Her identity and her role was wrapped in that. More than the loss of her unrewarding marriage was the loss of her identity.

Who we are and how we perceive ourselves is so important to our well-being that when it is shaken, it truly is like being in that snow globe as the pieces get whirled around.

Significant person in our life. This is likely the most common and well recognized loss. We experience this early on with the death of grandparents or older family members. Friends who come and go, romantic partners. This can also include pets. Surprisingly, this category of loss also includes celebrities or dignitaries whom we have never met. Princess Dianna, President Kennedy, Michael Jackson, Prince are all examples of celebrity death that impacts masses the same as a close relative.

Finally, our **dreams or visions**. This loss is often overlooked but so very important. Remember what I said earlier about vision – “where there is no vision, the people perish”. How many times have you seen people who have “lost their way”, have no rudder”, “aimlessly wonder”? Losing vision is devastating to life progress.

One couple I worked with who were having issues in their marriage came to realize that the trouble centered on their son. His choices and lifestyle. It was particularly impacting on the father. When I probed deeper with him, it became clear – to me – and soon to him, that he was in grief. He was grieving the loss of the son he had envisioned, dreamt of, planned for. Dad’s plan and dreams for the life his son would have had died and he was struggling to reconcile that. The emotional turmoil was creating havoc in the marriage and in the relationship he desired with his son. When he realized this loss and the grief he was having, he was able to quickly work through the son he wanted and the son he had.

Did you notice that the arrows linking the categories of loss are bi-directional? <- - - > That is not a mistake. In-fact, it is very intentional.

When I was 12 I broke my leg in a skiing accident. Not too devastating, as my social esteem rose due to people wanting to sign my cast, the novelty of the cast and the story, and also, as warm weather came I was able to swing that cast and really send the kick-ball sailing. Good thing as I was a bit slow around the bases.

When the Dr. was taking off the cast, he looked at me as I sat there on his exam table and asked, “are you planning to play football?” I was and told him so. He then said, “well, you can either play football, or you can walk!” Powerful declaration to someone who had just spent nearly 6 months in a cast and was looking forward to walking.

Dr. Klein went on to explain that my knee and hip joints were loose and that a good hit in a football game would take me out of the running – literally. That kind of declaration sinks in, even for a 12 year old. My self-concept was instantly altered due to my physical health. Fast forward 7 years and I would have my first knee surgery. Two years later I would have my second. When I was 35, the knee deterioration was so pronounced that I was told that I “had to have replacements – in a few years – because you are too young”.

My vision of hiking and outdoors activities in Scouting with my boys was now dead. My hunting buddy found a replacement for me because he still was able bodied and needed a partner who

could hike and climb with him at a fast pace. It was not for another 10 years until I was able to have the replacement surgery and begin to regain my health.

One simple declaration when I was 12 opened the door to what would be a loss in every category. What we think is just the loss of a special person, actually ripples across every other loss in one way or another.

This is why we grieve in such an individual manner and on our own timeframe. It is this multilayer effect of grief that makes it so unclear and simple. This is why stages and tasks just don't fit the process for most of us.

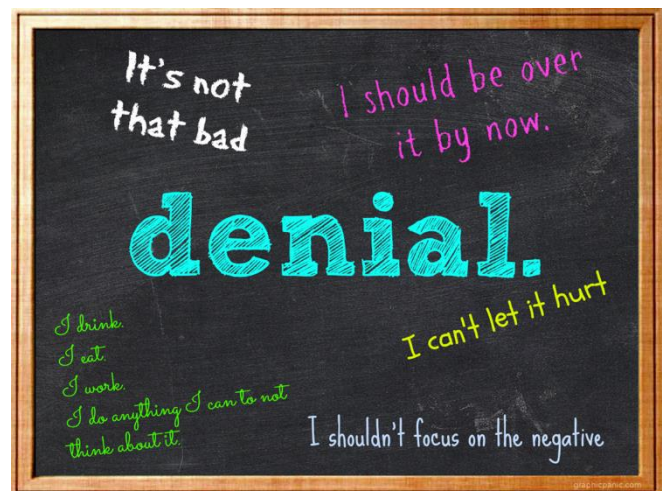
This being said, there Kubler-Ross did give us important concepts and language in the stages model. And even the Tasks are legitimate in that we must do all of those things, just not in such a clean orderly task list sort of way.

Let's look at how we do process grief and how to progress toward becoming a loss manager.

Shock, Denial, and Protest

Immediately after hearing the news of the loss, we automatically responds with Shock. We deny. We even protest and throw tantrums.

When my wrestling coach died, I found out on the day I returned home from a spring break trip with choir. It was my Sr. year. My last choir tour. My last year in H.S. The same year that my parents divorced and we moved from the home we built together. It was a year full of lasts and loss. To have this one heaped onto the pile was the preverbal straw that broke the camel's back.



Remember how I told you there are three distinct parts of the brain?

When we experience the news of loss, the first thing that happens is that the logic portion shuts off. The more shocking or unexpected the loss, the greater our logical retreat is.

When my good friend called me as I came home and told me in a flat deadpan voice "coach died", I snapped. I protested his simple statement. I told him how cruel and pathetic this joke

was. Denial, shock, protest all rushed forward as I attempted to comprehend what I was just told.

Momentarily logical reasoning shuts off. Emotional outbursts, illogical statements, flat out denial and open protest erupt, even when the proof is staring you straight on.

This denial tantrum can be fast, or prolonged, but it happens and to the outside observer looks and sounds delusional and immature. When you see it, the last thing you want to do is try to reason and logically discuss the issue. This will only increase their protest. Feeling helpless, illogical, and emotional will only increase the fear.

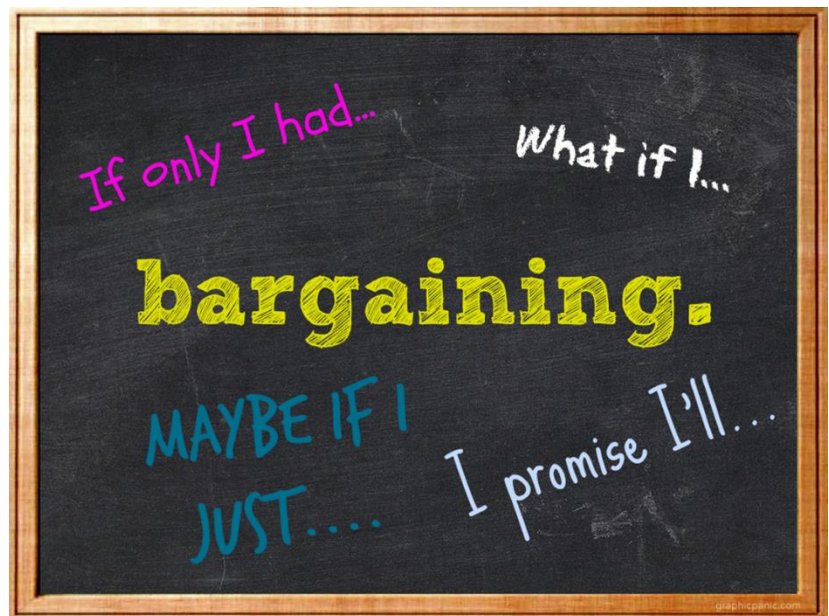
This is not the emotional expression seen later. This emotional outburst is pure primal reaction and an automatic expression of shock.

For the onlooker this protest can seem childish, irresponsible, and illogical. It is, someone in their logic mind can see that, but the griever cannot and needs support and safety. Any attempt to logically reason with them will only make matters worse. It is time to nurture and support.

Bargaining

The logic and reasoning brain attempt at making sense of the insult that has just occurred and prepare for/defend from the emotional abyss that is lying in wait.

Sounding much like justification or rationalization, bargaining is very logical.



Bargaining is the process by which we actively try to create normality in life in the chaos of loss. For those of us on the outside, bargaining can look very illogical, even psychotic. The behavior and the statements can literally leave us scratching our heads in wonder and worry.

Please understand, the reality is, bargaining is very rational to the grieving mind. The more we fight or challenge their “if I”, “when I”, “because I”, “if only”, etc. statements the more frustrated and alone the griever can feel.

Bargaining is the grieving minds attempt to logically make sense of the loss and how they can manage the impact of it. When the logic brain begins to come online after the initial shock, the only thing it can do in the moment is to bargain.

I will explore the best way to intervene with bargaining soon, but for now, just understand that it is normal, logical (to them) and a natural part of Good Grief, and becoming a Loss Manager.

The outward evidence of bargaining

"If I", "when I", "I only", "if only I had", "maybe ..."

Immediate change of lifestyle, diet, interests

Instant interest in nostalgia, memories, hoarding.

So what does it look like?

Bargaining can be seen in behavioral, emotional, and verbal or cognitive forms.

Hoarding for example is one behavior that is often exhibited by grieving individuals. The inability to let go of things that have been assigned emotional connection, or perhaps have become the embodiment of what was lost are forms of bargaining.

Other forms of bargaining behaviors might be excessive exercise, changes in diet or routine, or an obsession with a cause or movement associated with the cause of death or the person (thing) that was lost.

For example – When Candace Lightner started the group Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) after her 13 year old was killed in a hit and run accident, it could have been an activity of bargaining. “If I can stop just one death then my loss is not a total waste!” could easily have been a statement justifying and softening the blow of the loss.

We hear numerous cries after disasters and tragedies and now we are reminded that we should not use our blow dryers in the shower. In the case of MADD, bargaining can lead to positive coping and acceptance. But not all bargaining is as positive as this case.

When my grandfather died, my grandmother threw away his journals, rationalizing that “no one would ever want to read those old things”. What her logic brain was saying was, “I don’t want to read those and be reminded of the pain I am feeling.”

Likewise, some of the worst family fights I have ever seen have centered around bargaining and stuff. The paraphernalia left behind after a death or major loss becomes very “valuable” and begins to personify every memory that might be attached to it or to the person who it belonged to. Dusty trinkets are now priceless treasures and these illogical, emotional bargaining behaviors can create havoc in families.

Hoarding, avoiding, fighting are all forms of bargaining.

In the Native American tribe near my home town, there is a tradition that the home of the deceased be sealed for a year in order for the emotional pain and the threat of bargaining attachment to “stuff” be minimized. Perhaps this is not such a bad idea.

Purpose of bargaining - The parachute.

So, why do we bargain? What good can really come from such an illogical coping strategy?

Simply put – A LOT!

Imagine you are tossed out of an airplane at 30,000 feet. Hurtling to the ground your frantically scramble to find any safety net or coping to the chaos you are experiencing.



After your initial protest and tantrum at the one who tossed you out, the only thing you can do is to realize you have a parachute and to pull the ripcord. The cords that hold you to the canopy that is slowing you down and stopping you from crashing head first in to the emotional abyss you feel rushing up toward you, are the “If”, “When”, “Because”, “So that”, and on and on statements and behaviors of bargaining. The more at loss we feel, or the less supported we feel, the stronger and more abundant our bargaining cords will be.

Think about bargaining as the emergency brake in your car as you realize the regular brakes aren’t working and you are careening down a mountain pass. You pull on that lever and pray that it will be enough to stop your impending doom. Not knowing what lies ahead, or how to handle the mists of emotion welling up from the emotional abyss, you will do anything to try and stop the fall.

So what does this mean for you who are providing care and comfort? How do you assist with such illogical behavior or comments?

1. Do not take them away! The last thing we need when we are clinging to the tiny cords holding us to a parachute is to have someone come along and snip them.

Instead of rejecting or correcting, a simple validation “wouldn’t that be great”, “I really hope that happens” can make all the difference. You did not agree with the statement, but you did not strip it away.

2. Join them. Yes, join them. One day I was helping clean the patio at my grandparents when my grandfather was still up and able to get around a bit. Tucked under a drip edge of siding was an old metal fishing rod. Grandpa told me that he caught his first salmon on that rod. Because I was joining him in his preparations for death as he cleaned the patio (he was bargaining that he was still viable and that this was going to be good for grandma), I was able to keep that rod as a wall art memento. I wish I had been there for the journals after he died.

If they are changing a diet, hitting the gym as a way to bargain a Dr.'s prognosis, go with them. Support them. What will it hurt, even if there is really nothing that will come of it for them? You will have wonderful conversation and get in shape yourself.

Prepare for /defend from the emotional abyss that is lying in wait.

Primary and Secondary Emotions

Before I discuss the emotional abyss and the role it plays in the pathway to becoming a Loss Manager, let's look at what emotions really are and how they impact our lives. Primarily, the two different types of emotion, and even one that is not an emotion at all.

Typically categorized into two camps, emotions are one of the hardest things to define in our human experience. Much deeper than the automatic Fight/flight or freeze of the primitive animal brain that fires when we are in Shock, Denial and Protest – emotions are a mix of thought, feeling, and behavior.

Primary

Shame
Inadequacy
Desperation
Abandonment
Fear
Rejection
Sadness
Disappointment
Numb
Hurt
Despair
Hopelessness
Loneliness

Secondary

Anger*
Mad
Rage
Blamed
Frustration
Shutting down
Walling off
Silent treatment
Indifferent
Overwhelmed

Although the term emotion is frequently used in our daily life, it is not easily defined. In the scientific literature, emotions are described as . . .

“Coordinated sets of responses to internal or external events which have a particular significance for the organism (e.g., Lazarus, 1993). These response sets may involve **cognitive, behavioral, physiological, and neural mechanisms** and aim to orchestrate the best possible response to significant events.

The subjective experience of an emotion is often called a feeling. Emotions and feelings refer to distinct and rather brief phenomena. In contrast, moods refer to less specific and longer-lasting experiences. Stress is a term to describe a less distinct alarm response, which may eventually turn into specific emotions. In the scientific language, affect is an encompassing term which includes emotions, feelings, motivational impulses, and moods together (Gross, 2014). In everyday language, the terms affect, emotions, and feelings are often used interchangeably.”

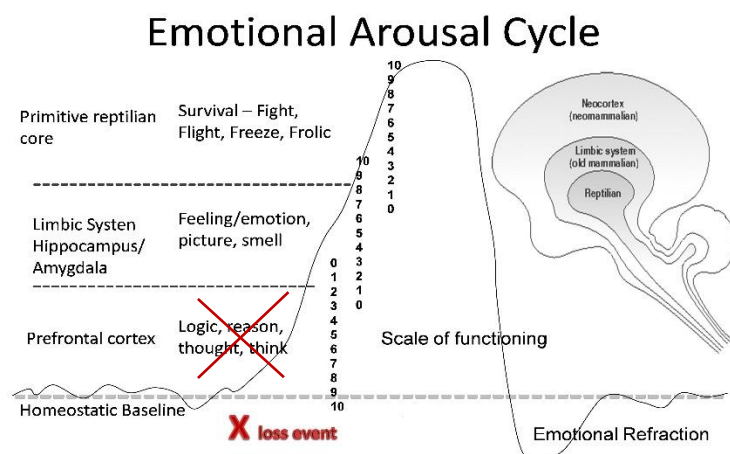
One of the greatest losses in life is that in general we do not allow for the expression of emotion (“Stop or I will give something to cry about!”, “Boys [men] don’t cry!”), or we just don’t emotions openly so our emotional vocabulary is limited at best.

This limited ability to express what we are feeling, or worse, the feeling that we are not allowed to express our feelings has left many of my clients in a serious tailspin as they try to manage their emotional abyss.

The more often we can discuss emotion, and in particular, the primary emotions, the better off the griever will be. Many times they will not be able to see it, or put a finger to the actual feeling. That is when we must mirror and reflect, verbalize what we perceive to be the emotional experience, and express our own primary emotion so that they can begin to connect to what is happening inside.

I taught you earlier about the brain and how in a highly emotional state the logic portion of the brain shuts off, this is why we must become the logical mirror, or voice, for those whom we are trying to mourn with.

Until the pain and fear of the loss subside to a point we can begin to look objectively at it, the emotional abyss will continue to throw us for a loop and can send us into a Shock, Denial, and Protest repeatedly.



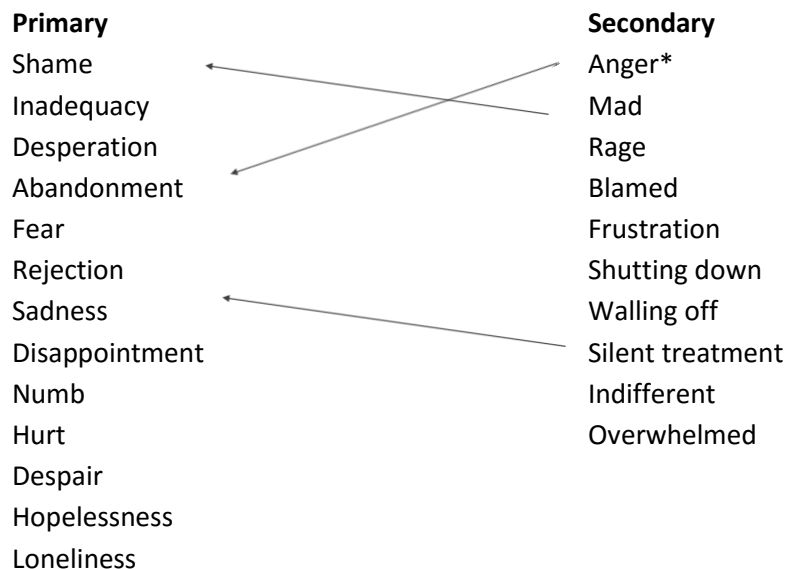
The more often we can safely touch on the primary emotion – the real emotion – the less afraid of it we will be. The more often we can help them touch their real emotion in a safe, comfortable space, the less afraid of it they will be.

As we discussed earlier, bargaining is a strong force that clouds and shields us from the emotional abyss. Even our own bargaining and abyss when we are trying to help someone we love who is grieving. Only by identifying what the bog of emotion is made up of will the griever feel safe to wade through it or step over it.

A word about anger.

Anger is not an emotion. Anger is the behavioral expression of a primary emotion. It is the overwhelmed emotional brain lashing out and trying to protect itself. It is best to ignore anger and address the actual emotion.

We react or project anger to cover the primary emotion or to protect us from anyone accessing our tender wounded self.



As part of the bargaining process,

- ~ the secondary emotion is a cover to the
- ~ deeper and more intense primary emotion,
- ~ and also expresses the intense
- ~ physiological response to emotion.

As you learn to release the emotional backwaters that are trapped in the abyss, learning the difference between primary and secondary emotions is key.

Primary emotions are direct responses to the present situation. Most generally buried deep below the secondary emotion, these primary feelings are the true emotions and the most painful part of any loss.

Secondary emotions are reactive/behavioral responses to the primary emotion. These are typically the initial reactions experienced by the griever and the caregiver.

Staying focused solely on the secondary emotions is a way of bargaining, or refusing to look at the reality.

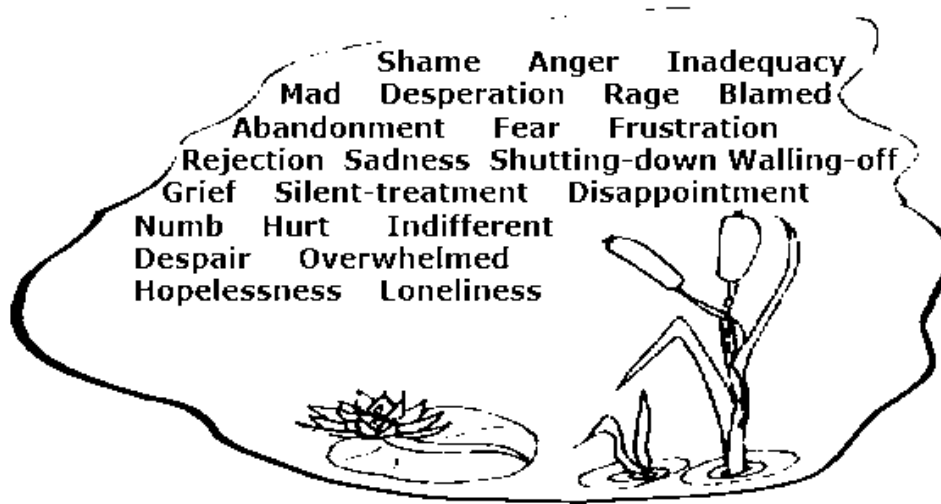
How have experienced bargaining?

What did it look like?

How did it impact the griever?

How did it impact you?

The Emotional Abyss



From 30,000 feet as you are falling from that aircraft and looking for your parachute, this quagmire of all our emotions can look daunting and foreboding.

Only by zooming in and identifying what is really in the abyss we feel we are heading for, can we begin to realize that there is nothing there we have not handled before. Also, it is not one massive thing, but lots of little manageable things.

One client described the emotional abyss beautifully when she asked if I had ever been snorkeling. She described how when you first start to snorkel, you don't go down very far or stay very long, but as your lung capacity grows and your fear diminishes you can go deep and stay longer. She said that this is what it was like to begin exploring the emotional abyss. At first it was large and deep. She did not have the capacity to stay in it long/ As we began to identify the small pieces that were in it, she saw that it was not one big mass, but lots of little things. Then she was able to go deep and linger longer because she was not afraid of ALL that was there and could work on just the one that was most pressing at the moment. Eventually, she said, it all just seemed to be small manageable things.

The more often you step in and identify the primary emotions that are in the abyss, the less foreboding it will be.

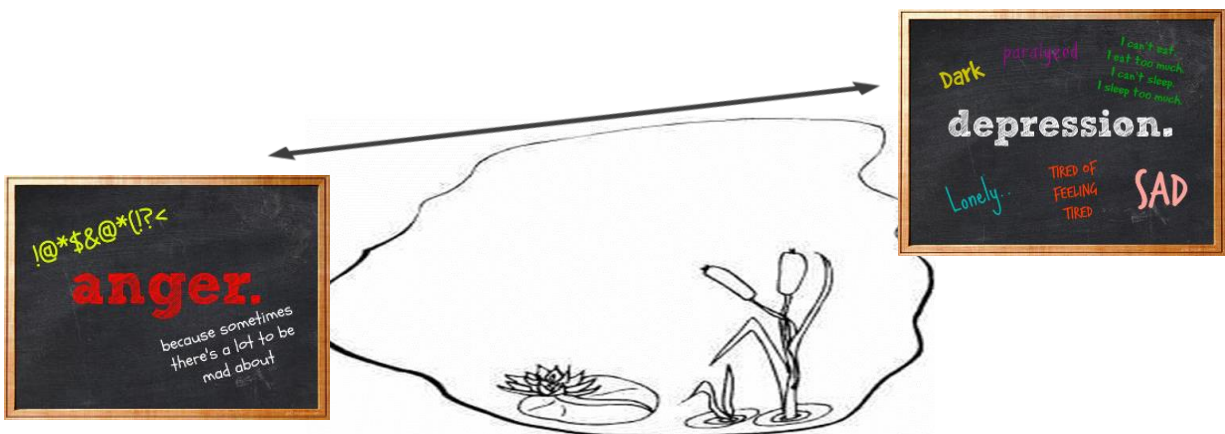
So many times I have heard “we weren’t allow to be emotional” or some variation of it. Life is an emotional experience. It is normal and healthy to cry, rant, feel, and to express those emotions. Earlier I referred to our emotional flow, or the emotional river. When we dam up that flow and trap the emotions that are in us and that run through us, we are creating the emotional backwaters of the abyss.

If you have been denied the free flow of your emotional self, please know that it is okay. In fact, it is vital to a healthy life. Please, emote. If others around you cannot handle it and try to stifle your expression, they are not ready or able to help you.

In the Pathways Through Grief coaching session – Complicated Grief – I deeply explore what happens when we deny the emotions we hold, but it is important to understand what happens when we do not venture into the abyss.

Oscillating between externalized emotional outbursts and internalized withdrawal and depression, chaos and emotional turmoil ensue. It is a roller-coaster ride that traps many. Too often we see people heavily medicated and misdiagnosed, when the thing that needs to happen is for someone to help them begin to identify what it is that they are afraid of, what it is that they are feeling, and holding their hand as they cross the abyss.

So many times I have heard “we weren’t allow to be emotional” or some variation of it. Life is an emotional experience. It is normal and healthy to cry, rant, feel, and to express those emotions. If you have been denied the free flow of your emotional self, please know that it is okay. In fact, it is vital to a healthy life. Please, emote. If others around you cannot handle it and try to stifle your expression, they are not ready or able to help you.



Finding meaning in the darkness –



3 things you can do to help you find

coping,
understanding,
and
acceptance

Coping

Seek safety and security through routine.

Remember, there is no set, prescribed timeline. The reality is that a Life With Loss means we never fully “get over it” we learn to live with it.

Maintaining a regular and predictable routine can make a big difference in helping you find peace and safety.

The grieving mind does not make decisions well. The more predictable and routine we can keep our life, the less stress we will feel.



Understanding

Understand the lay of the land and how your life is now.

Stop trying to rearrange but comprehend the change.

Remember that snow globe we talked about earlier? The one we are in when the loss hits us and the pieces of our life start to spin and whirl around us?



One of the more important things we can do to end the whirling is to just sit. To sit in the middle and do nothing. Let the pieces of our life fall and land where they are. Only after they land can we figure out where it all is and what we can rearrange and what has been permanently altered.

Let the piece land where they may. Don't stress and struggle over what is changing. There will be change. Before you can begin to rebuild your world, or create a new world with what is left

you must first know what you have around you to work with. Just sitting and being still can let the pieces settle. Just like that snow globe, every time we attempt to make a decision, make a move, before the dust has settled, it will only stir it up more.

Acceptance

Recognize and acknowledge what is in your emotional abyss. Identify primary feelings directly and specifically –

“I feel . . .”

It seems that like so many other parts of our world, loss – particularly death is removed from us. Morticians and funeral directors handle the affairs, and the city or cemetery owners deal with the grave site.



I remember a good friend who grew up in rural New Mexico telling me about the family digging the grave, caring for the body, building the casket, transporting their loved one, and finally filling the grave. They did everything. He actually talked about this experience with thankfulness. To be able to attend to his loved one to the very end. This was in the early 2000's, not 1800 Wild West.

I am not advocating that we need to return to those ways in all things, but there is an honesty and frankness about it that we can embrace.

Talk openly about your experience and allow others to freely express what they are feeling. I am grateful that when I got off the phone with my buddy, and sat there in shock that my coach had died, no one ridiculed me or told me to “stop being stupid”. When I threw on my shoes and went for a run not knowing where I was going or what I was doing – I was just running, no one informed me that it was illogical and fruitless.

Permission to grieve is probably the fastest and healthiest ways to find acceptance and to become a loss manager. Permission to do it your way, in your time, and as it flows for you.

If you are in a supportive role it is vital that you help them speak openly and honestly about their feelings, and even encourage them to say it like it is, even if that is hurtful or confusing to you. It is their process.

Acceptance and can take many forms. Our role is to embrace it and encourage it.

Here are some personal exploration questions you can use to help you find acceptance and become a Loss Manager.

When did you first become aware of death?

With whom did you discuss it?

How did adults respond to your questions?

What deaths have you experienced?

How have your attitudes changed about death?

Strong fantasies/dreams about death?

Memorializing and remembering - Acceptance

The greatest benefit of acceptance is the freedom it gives you to embrace the love you have for the one you lost.

Bud Caldwell's been taking daisies and a few pennies to a bench in Wisconsin every day for the past two years to honor his late wife.

But after snow blanketed the walkway to the seating area in a Fond Du Lac park it looked as though he would have to stop his daily routine.



That was until two kind strangers stepped in and decided to shovel the snow-covered walkway.

Jerrod Ebert and Joe Smaltz, two Fond Du Lac park employees said that they spotted the 82-year-old sitting in his car staring at the bench because he could not get to it.

And realizing that he was stranded, they decided to shovel the walkway and keep the path clear all through winter.

The employees said that they did it so that the romantic could visit the spot he bought and dedicated to his late wife, Betty, after she died two years ago.

Ebert said: 'We both commented that we just can't have this. We've got to make sure he can get to his bench and talk to his wife.'

'We did it only because of his love for his wife. He truly misses her.'

Caldwell and his wife spent nearly 56 years together and he has found comfort in his daily routine since she passed away.

He told CBS 58 News: 'A lot of people might think it's a dumb thing. But I don't.'

In fact it is the best part of his day.

'Good morning dear,' he says as he approaches her bench with her picture on it.

And come rain or shine he makes sure that he is there to spend time remembering his dearly departed wife.

The gifts that he leaves - the daisies and the pennies - are both tributes to songs the couple loved during their years together: 'Daisy a Day,' and 'Pennies From Heaven.'

So, Caldwell is truly grateful for the park employee's gesture.

He said with pride: 'Two young men did such a nice thing for an old man.'

He then ends his daily trip by telling his wife: 'See you later munchkin' and kisses the picture of Betty as he walks away.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2936644/Strangers-shovel-snow-82-year-old-deliver-daisy-late-wife.html#ixzz4FXwKGNCW>

Becoming a Pathway Through Grief

Mini Course

Moving from denial to a well-managed life in just 4 weeks.

Where do we go from here? I have a very special opportunity for you.

The Pathway Through Grief mini course will coach the griever and the care giver in the process of grief and how to effectively move from denial to loss manager.

If even just one concept or skill from this course would help you in your grief, than it would more than pay for itself in the joy, happiness, and the security it will bring you in life.

What have I included in this mini course?

I have broken down the pathway through grief in such a way that you will find...

- ~ Clarity to what loss really is and why it is making such a huge impact on your life.
- ~ Understanding of why you are having brain fog, cycles of depression and joy, and sometimes just want to sleep.
- ~ A clear path to hope, happiness, and life.
- ~ Peace of mind and heart that your going to be well, that you are fine, and that your life will be better than it feels.

As a member of the Pathways group you will receive –

- ~ Access to the 5 downloadable coaching webinars of the Pathway Through Grief coaching program.
- ~ A PDF Personal Pathway Guidebook
- ~ Access to a Private Pathways Facebook group where Brett interacts and answers questions and other on their path are there to support and enliven each other.

AND

Access to a live coaching Q/A call with Brett to increase your clarity and understanding and to hear from others who are also finding the joy and light that comes as the transition from an active griever to a Loss Manager and discover the happiness that life has to offer.

ADDITIONALLY

You will receive your first 2 months membership in the Loss Managers Hangout absolutely FREE.

This exclusive MEMBERS ONLY Facebook group and live coaching call with Brett each month is a \$27.97 monthly value. Your first 2 months will greatly increase your moving through the Pathway and rediscovering peace in your life.

Pathways Through Grief Regular price - \$97.00

That investment brings you -

- ~ lifetime access to the 5 part coaching series and guidebooks
- ~ the private Pathways Facebook Group
- ~ 2 months* membership in Loss Managers Hangout
- ~ Bonus group Q/A live session with Brett

Get the Pathway Through Grief coaching program for roughly 37% off today.

Go to – www.PathwayThroughGrief.com