

HOPE & HEALING

Finding Relief on the Road Well-Traveled

A Gentle Workbook for
Recovering from Grief and Loss





WELCOME TO GRIEF

“It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.”
– Epictetus, Greek Philosopher

Grief.

It's a four-letter word masquerading as five. It's pain. It's loss. It's love.

It can build over a lifetime.

- Our friends flourish. We stagnate.
- Our face ages. We are surrounded by ever more youthful people.
- We remain alone. It's not a choice. It just happened.

We may see it approaching.

- Newer, fresher, more eager talent enters our field and gains the attention that once was showered on us.
- A loved one grows distant.
- Rent is coming due.

It often comes in an instant.

- Cars collide.
- A life-changing diagnosis is shared.
- A loved one dies.

The emotions are myriad.

- Shock. Sadness. Anger. Anxiety. Emptiness. Numbness. Longing. Confusion.

Grief is a rising tide and a crashing surf, occurring both expectedly and without warning.

It lasts for a moment. It continues forever.

Some suggest there are 6, 7, or 8 basic emotions each of us feels. Others say that number is 21. Still others say 25 is the range of emotions we experience. Psychologist Robert Plutchik



DIFFICULTY IN STARTING?

“The greater the obstacle, the more glory in overcoming it.”

- Molière, French playwright, actor, and poet

Obstacles

In our experience, often the hardest part of using any workbook – or completing any large task – is starting it. Put a check next to the reasons you might have for not beginning your grief work:

- “I’m overwhelmed.” ☐
 - Grief can be overwhelming, all-consuming. It so fills our thoughts that there isn’t room for much else. And this is precisely the reason to begin; to help create room in your mind and in your life for more positive emotions.
- “Why bother?” ☐
 - “It’ll go away on its own.” Or “Everybody has grief. I’m not special.” Our time is precious. We are only allotted so much of it here on Earth. Certainly, anything we can do to make what time we do have as light and enjoyable as possible seems like a good thing. That’s why bother.
- “It’s going to be too painful.” ☐
 - You are already in pain. Will doing grief work be more painful? Perhaps. But even if it does create, at least in the short term, greater pain, the end result will be that you have worked to free yourself from your loss that has become an anchor in your life.
- “I can’t focus.” ☐
 - “My thoughts are so jumbled that sometimes I can’t even remember what I have to do next.”
- “I have too much other stuff going on.” ☐
 - “I already have too many commitments without adding a new one.” ☐
 - “I’m afraid of what the result might be” ☐
 - “I’m familiar with my pain. I know what that feels like. In fact, I’m so used to it that I have no idea what it might feel like to not have that pain in my life. And if I don’t, then I’ll have to fill it with something else. I have no idea what that might be, and I am afraid of not knowing.” ☐



YOUR GRIEF

"Every experience, no matter how bad it seems,
holds within it a blessing of some kind.

The goal is to find it."

– The Buddha, South Asian wandering ascetic
and religious teacher in 6th or 5th century BCE

Loss is about learning to say goodbye. And saying goodbye is never easy. It marks the end. And while the cliché “every end marks a new beginning” is true, you don’t want to hear that. Not now. For now, you want to grieve your loss, whatever it is.

WHAT ARE THINGS IN YOUR LIFE YOU HAVE LOST? WHICH OF THESE ARE YOU STILL GRIEVING?

One of the most frustrating things in life is that we rarely get to say goodbye to a person, place, or thing because at the time we don’t know it’s the last time we’ll see them. Think of a friend from your past that you’re no longer in contact with. Now try and remember the very last words you said to them. Or even the last time you were with them. Often we can’t. That’s because we rarely know in the moment that our time with them will be our last.

The power of saying goodbye to some of the most important people and things in our life cannot be overstated.

LIST SOME PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS YOU NEVER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY GOODBYE TO:



GRIEF IS THE PRICE WE PAY FOR LOVE

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard."
- Winnie the Pooh, fictional anthropomorphic teddy bear created by A. A. Milne

The chapter heading is part of a statement by Queen Elizabeth II in response to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States.

"Nothing that can be said can begin to take away the anguish and the pain of these moments. Grief is the price we pay for love."

In fact, Queen Elizabeth's words were most likely inspired by the words of English psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes in his 1972 book *Bereavement: Studies of Grief in Adult Life*.

"The pain of grief is just as much a part of life as the joy of love;
it is, perhaps, the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment."

THE FIRST MAJOR LOSS IN YOUR LIFE AND YOUR RESPONSE TO IT:

OTHER LOSSES YOU'VE EXPERIENCED AND YOUR RESPONSE TO THEM:

Just as Queen Elizabeth II and much of the world were affected by the incredible grief America felt as the result of the 9/11 terror attacks, we too have empathy for the pain felt by others regarding their personal loss.



GRIEF BREAK #1

"There is a time for departure,
even when there's no certain place to go."

- Tennessee Williams, American playwright and screenwriter

Grieving is exhausting. Of course, a lot of things can be exhausting, but after those efforts, we often feel exhilarated, rather than debilitated. When we walk to the top of a mountain, we feel we've accomplished something. When we're exhausted from grief, our exhaustion only has our spirit sink deeper as we think, "I'm still hurting. I don't know when, if ever, my pain will end."

Congratulations! You've started on your journey of healing from your loss. But no doubt it's still very much top of mind. Particularly after some of the work you've done here. Throughout this workbook, "Grief Breaks" will appear. The purpose of these is, yes, to give yourself a break from grieving. There's no rule that says you can't use these even when you're not doing the work of healing from grief. In fact, we suggest you do. But the reason we suggest you do them as you work through this book is to occasionally give yourself permission to take a break from your grieving.

Although each grief break is unique, they all have one thing in common. Each prompts you to focus on something, even if only for a moment, other than your grief. Each grief break demands that you place your full attention, again, even if only briefly, somewhere else, specifically somewhere "lighter."

Makes Scents to Me

Candles are lovely additions to any environment. They can be purchased relatively inexpensively, and they're simple to use. Just place them away from flammable items, light, and enjoy.

So, buy yourself a candle. But rather than simply purchasing one (or more) online, go to a store where you can smell different ones. And when you get to the store, take your time. Smell as many candles as you'd like. Smell them all if you have time. Because the more time that you



GRIEF IS MORE THAN GRIEF

“No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear.”

— C.S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*; British writer, literary scholar, and Anglican lay theologian

By mid-May of 2020, more than 100,000 American deaths were related to COVID. By the end of the year, that number would surpass 350,000. On May 25th of that year, the world witnessed the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer who suffocated Floyd by kneeling on his neck for almost 9 minutes. The incident prompted protests not only across the United States but throughout the world.⁵ From New Zealand to Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan to Iceland, people gathered to share their feelings. What were those feelings? Without asking each person present, we don't know. But we can be confident in suggesting that Floyd's murder prompted a variety of feelings. A study from the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences⁶, noted that Gallup data showed more than a third of all Americans and nearly half of Black Americans experienced “anger and sadness [which] increased to unprecedented levels in the US population.” The study goes on to state that data from the US Census Household Pulse highlighted that “depression and anxiety severity increased among Black Americans at significantly higher rates than that of white Americans.”

When President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963, the grief felt by many in the event's immediate aftermath included the emotions of loss, shock, horror, and sorrow. In time, these emotions sometimes morphed for some into anger, disbelief, and distrust.

In January 1986, Americans experienced another national grief when the shuttle Challenger exploded shortly after liftoff. How one experienced that grief depended on many factors. Family members of the ill-fated astronauts were undoubtedly traumatized. A different kind of trauma must have been experienced by children watching the launch at school, a flight that featured the first teacher to go into space, Christa McAuliffe. Presumably NASA personnel who worked on the Challenger program, and particularly those who designed and built the aircraft,

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:George_Floyd_protests_map#/map/0

⁶ <https://www.pnas.org/doi/full/10.1073/pnas.2109139118#:~:text=These%20increases%20were%20more%20pronounced,than%20that%20of%20White%20Americans.>



DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRIEF



"We bereaved are not alone.
We belong to the largest company in all the world —
the company of those who have known suffering."
- Helen Keller, American author, civil rights activist, lecturer

There are many kinds of grief. You may have experienced many of these. On a scale of 0-5, with 0 being “never” and 5 being “often,” note the frequency with which you experience each of these types of grief in the drop-down menu at the end of each paragraph. All menus begin with a default of “0.” If you have experienced a particular type of grief, note the cause of it.

Abbreviated Grief

This pain is typically intense, with profound sadness and disbelief. Yet the pain typically does not last long, and we move on quickly. People who lose a spouse and quickly remarry often are experiencing abbreviated grief. Although the grief is abbreviated, it may not have vanished. 0

Abortion Grief

No one becomes pregnant with the intention of having an abortion. Whether the pregnancy is planned or not, or the fetus has a devastating gestational challenge, and even if the pregnant woman and her partner believe that, for whatever reason, an abortion is the correct action, having an abortion can be a very traumatic experience. Additionally, because of the varied views on abortion, getting support for grieving one can be very challenging. 0

Abrupt Grief

Abrupt grief is prompted by an event that happens quickly and unexpectedly, like an accidental death or other unforeseen major life upheaval. And like the event itself, the response is often immediate, with very powerful emotions being created. 0



TAKE YOUR POWER BACK

“Things we lose have a way of coming back to us in the end,
if not always in the way we expect.”

J. K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*

Thoughts. Feelings. Actions. They are the very foundation of our existence. We have thoughts. Our thoughts become feelings. And our feelings prompt actions.

Thoughts of loss, especially tectonic loss, prompt very real, very deep feelings of grief. And the actions prompted by that seemingly bottomless grief may range from isolation to self-harm and everything in between. But if we take a moment to pull ourselves back from our suffering and look at our experience with just a bit of detachment and remember the sequence – thoughts become feelings, and feelings prompt actions – we may be able to reframe that very first step in the process, our thoughts, to change the entire sequence.

When we experience loss, any number of thoughts might play on a loop in our mind:

- “That was my soulmate; I’ll never love again.”
- “I turned down what would have been the perfect job; I’ll never have an opportunity like that again.”
- “My parent died; I will never hug them again.”

In each case, our thought process is a two-part effort. The first part is the reality. Or at least what we perceive to be our reality:

- Believing someone is a soulmate prompts a couple of questions: What is a soulmate? Is there even such a thing? And if there is, am I only allowed one?
- The job we turned down, left, or were fired from may very well be a one-of-a-kind job—a well-placed position for the most successful business in an industry. But will it always be the most successful business in that industry? And what does being with the most successful business in an industry mean to us? Might we find similar opportunities at another business in the industry? Are our skills transferable to another industry? Perhaps we might start our own business.
- Or a parent has died. That is clearly an incontrovertible fact. And we will never have the opportunity to interact in real time with them again on this plane. We will never feel



What This Journey Can Look Like

This sampler offers a glimpse into the full Hope and Healing Grief workbook experience.

There is no right way to move through this workbook. Some pages may feel immediately relevant, while others may not resonate right now — or may come into focus later. You may find yourself writing a great deal in one section and very little in another. You may move quickly at times, and at other moments return to the same page again and again.

This workbook is not something to complete, but something to return to. Grief does not unfold in a straight line, and healing rarely does either. The invitation here is simply to notice what is present, to reflect when you are able, and to be gentle with yourself as you go. Wherever you begin — and however slowly you move — is enough.

There are no guarantees about how long grief may last, what healing might look like, or whether it will unfold in ways we expect. What matters is that, by taking time to notice, reflect, and stay present with your experience, you are honoring your grief — and yourself.