

Grief

"Showing our grief is part of healing. Concealing grief interferes with its expression. In hiding our feelings away, we hide ourselves. To hide our emotions is to discount them. Our emotions are us; when we discount them, we discount ourselves... Open expression of our feelings is vital."

Reference: Live With Loss by Kate Slagle

We grieve when we experience a loss in our life. The loss can be the result of experiencing the death of a person who is important in your life – this is the most well recognized cause of grief. We also experience grief when we have other types of loss. Some common examples of loss are a divorce or a break-up, a physical illness, a home, a pet, the use of mental faculties, a job or a miscarriage. Sometimes these types of losses go unacknowledged in our lives either by us or others in our life who may be reluctant or too polite to talk about difficult events. Yet the impact of the wound from the loss remains. Without recognition of the loss many people develop coping behaviors that are unhealthy. Examples of unhealthy coping behaviors include using food, alcohol and or drugs to numb feelings, denial, isolating from others, and replacing the loss immediately with another person or place (i.e. moving) to avoid empty or painful feelings.

Ask yourself what losses you have had in your life and if you have truly grieved for these losses. Don't rule something out because it seems like others may view it as insignificant. If something comes to mind, it is a significant experience in your life and it is important to you. That is what really matters.

It is important to accept the loss and to experience the feelings associated with that loss in order to begin to move forward in your life. Just as loss is a fact that cannot be changed or forgotten, you will always be changed by the experience of the loss. Finding a way to incorporate that loss into your life story will be a significant and healing process in grieving.

Rules for Healthy Grieving

Accept your grief as being healthy.
Feel all of your grief feelings.
Allow yourself to experience the pain of loss.
Don't try to replace loss immediately with another person, place, thing, behavior, or activity.
Talk with safe people about your feelings and experience of loss.
Don't change the subject if pain and grief come up.
Take good care of yourself -nutrition, rest, exercise.
Take as much time as you need to grieve – each person has their own timetable.

Modified from: A Gift to Myself by Dr. Charles Whitfield

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