

GRIEF MYTHS

- Grief has an endpoint.
- Once you are done grieving, life will return to “normal”
- There is a consistent and predictable timeline for grief.
- The first year is the worst.
- Time heals all wounds.
- You recover from grief like you recover from a cold, it gets a little better every day until it completely goes away.
- If you are still talking about your loved one after ____ years it means you’re “stuck”.
- If you still display photos of your loved one after ____ years it means you’re “stuck”.
- If you haven’t gotten rid of your loved one’s belongings after ____ years it means you’re “stuck”.
- If you still cry when you think/talk about your loved one after ____ years it means you’re “stuck”.
- Women grieve more than men.
- Men don’t want to talk about their grief.
- You can only grieve a death.
- You can’t grieve something you never had.
- Your friends and family will always be the best support.
- Someone who experienced the same type of loss will definitely be supportive and understand what you’re going through.
 - Just because someone also lost a child, a spouse, a parent, a pet, whatever, it doesn’t mean your experiences will be the same. Heck, they may not even be similar. Sometimes people with similar losses end up being your best support, sometimes it is someone with a totally different kind of loss who you connect with. You just never know.
- Grief follows a similar path and timeline for everyone.
- If you aren’t crying, then you aren’t grieving.
- Grieving is a problem.
 - Nope, it is a natural reaction to loss. We all, sadly, go through it. Just because something is painful doesn’t mean we should avoid or ignore it.
- The goal of grief is to “move on”.
- The goal of grief is to “get over it”.
- The goal of grief is to “find closure”.
 - Ah, they myth of closure, moving on, and getting over it. Didn’t we mention from the get go that there is no endpoint? We never tie up our grief with a nice little bow and move on. That just isn’t how it works. What we do is learn to carry it with us in meaningful and healthy ways. We use it to continue a connection with the person we loved, while moving forward.
- Certain types of loss are inherently “better” or “worse” than other types of loss.
- Young children don’t grieve.

- Children should not attend funerals.
- Children are resilient, you don't need to worry about them.
 - The good news, children certainly can be very resilient. They myth? That is doesn't take effort, work, or support. I once heard someone compare resiliency in children to children's ability to learn a language. It is much easier for children to learn languages than adults, but this does not mean they will learn a language if we don't teach, coach and support them. I have always liked this analogy. Research shows us that childhood trauma can impact us through adulthood in countless ways, psychological and physical. We need to give children the appropriate time, attention and tools to cultivate that resiliency.
- Not having a funeral will hinder your ability to grieve or "find closure".
- You grieve less when you know in advance someone is going to die.
- You grieve less when the person who died is older and "lived a long life".
- Your grief is easier when someone was suffering, because you are relieved they aren't suffering anymore.
- When someone dies by suicide it is their own fault or they were "selfish".
- When someone has a miscarriage, it was likely brought on by not taking care of themselves, stress, taking birth control, lifting something heavy, or some other ridiculous myth.
- People don't grieve after a miscarriage in the same way they grieve other deaths.
- If something helped another grieving person, it will help you.
- If something helped you while you were grieving, it will be helpful to most other people who are grieving.
- Once you get through all the "firsts" (first anniversary, birthday, holiday season) they will get easier and easier.
- Grieving and mourning are the same thing.
- Just because someone looks okay when they are grieving it means they feel okay.
- When you lose a spouse, if you haven't started dating after _____ years it means you're stuck.
- After losing a spouse you need to start dating in order to "move on".
- After the death of a child, having another child lessens your grief.
- Being reminded that your loved one "wouldn't want you to be sad" is helpful
- Grief is the same as depression.
- Grief is a single emotion.
- Once someone dies, you can no longer have a relationship with them.
- When someone dies you will always feel their presence if you are attuned to it.
- If you have faith in God it will lessen your grief.
- Grief is, ultimately, always a transformative and positive experience that will eventually make you a better person.
 - Sometimes grief really is positive and transformative and we can reflect on all the ways it has made us a better person. That is a wonderful and amazing thing when it happens. That said, not everyone finds or embraces transformation in grief.

- You cannot grieve someone who is still alive.
- If you avoid grief and keep a stiff upper lip, it will eventually go away.
- If a widow or widower has photographs of their late husband or wife up around the house it means they aren't ready to get involved in a new relationship.
- Eventually you will stop noticing and/or being affected by grief triggers.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- The world goes on. Even when you are half insane from grief, bills still need to be paid; even when you feel like you swallowed a hand grenade, you still have to balance a checkbook.
- Grief does not only happen when a person dies, but accompanies any loss. It is felt when you are estranged from family members or friends, lose a job, lose a pet, lose your independence, get divorced, and countless other things.
- It is okay to laugh.
- You are the only one who can say how you should feel.
- Grief can make it terrifying to get close to people, for fear of losing them.
- It is especially devastating when you lose the person who supported you through other losses.
- You still grieve the loss of people you didn't like or had a strained relationship with.
- If you are grieving the loss of someone who has hurt you deeply, the process of grieving may take longer and may be more difficult. It may bring up old wounds, regrets, and 'unfinished business'.
- It is normal and acceptable at times to feel relieved after someone has died.
- Remember that the brain is wired to be biased toward negative thoughts and memory recall. If possible, take the time to reflect upon and remember the positive.
- It is okay to be angry that people say stupid things, but remember they showed up to show their support for you and their respect for the deceased. Remember that, not the stupid comments if you can.
- Grief – You can't go around it. You can't go over it. You can't go under it. You have to go THROUGH it or you have to go WITH it.
- When it comes to grief, there are no rules.
- Process guilt, but don't keep processing it over and over to the point that it is harmful or unproductive.
- "Why?" and "What if...?" are unanswerable. The trick is to figure out how to live without the answers.
- You may find the person you lost was the glue that held your family/friends together. You might drift apart temporarily or permanently, or you might find new glue.
- Others may act like the person you lost was perfect. You'll feel like the only one who saw imperfections and this will make you feel guilty.
- It's okay to be mad at the person for leaving you.

- You will forget – things about them, or them altogether for a moment – and this will bring a new style of guilt. You will remember them in unexpected ways.
- It's okay to live, laugh, and love. Let there be no guilt about it!
- Sometimes we do most of our grieving before our loved one dies.
- Not all the people who said, "If you need anything, anything at all" are able to back that up with action. It hurts but it doesn't mean they don't care..
- Not only should you "debrief" *after* care-giving but also *during* care-giving.
- Some people don't know what to say, or will say the wrong things, but this doesn't mean they don't care. Consider whether you would have understood this grief before it happened to you.
- Sometimes grief will become a habit, it feels safe because you've been grieving so long that it starts to feel like part of you, like you don't know how to be happy, or content, or calm.
- Grieving will feel like you are keeping that person in your life, but you can be happy without 'letting them go'
- Losing someone you love is like an amputation, no matter how well you learn to get around, you will never be the same. You don't 'get over' it, you just adjust.
- 'Cut yourself some slack' and take solace where you find it.
- The person grieving may have never had such a loss before, and they themselves may say ignorant things.
- Every death is sudden.
- Religious faith can also be strengthened by loss.
- Grief makes you lose focus and makes it difficult to complete tasks.
- When someone dies from suicide, sometimes people do not express sympathies. Sometimes they don't say anything at all. All grief should be acknowledged, regardless of how the death occurred.
- Sometimes you can't physically say goodbye to a person before they die and that can be devastating.
- Suicide loss can be extremely traumatic. The shock and denial makes it difficult to begin truly grieving.
- Grief can make you push people away.
- The term closure is not helpful. Bank accounts are closed, windows are closed, but the love we carry for those closest to us never closes.
- Too many people will try to impose time limits on your grief.
- Don't make big decisions simply because you feel really good or really bad on a particular day.
- Don't throw away the deceased's personal possessions too soon or too quickly. Later you may find that you actually wanted to save more than you thought.
- Let somebody else do the driving, at least for a few days.
- It DOES get better. Slower than we wish, but it does.
- For many people grief is cumulative. Each subsequent death of a person important to us is amplified by the grief we experienced over those who predeceased them.
- Do not allow anyone to tell you how to grieve.

- Do not gauge your grief by the way others grieve as everyone is different.
- You grieve what you never had
- It is a tragic reality that sometimes you measure life in the deaths that have occurred, or think of life as what happened before the death and what happened after the death.
- Grief puts you in a club you wish you were not in...but the connection is so strong and so emotional with others who grieve, that you're thankful for the club at the same time as wanting to escape it!
- You may feel like ending your life. If this is you, do what I did and find a support system. If you need suicide support, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Helpline at 1-800-273-8255.
- If your doctor is a good doctor he will not treat you like you're crazy.
- Be on your own terms. If you do have to attend potentially uncomfortable family functions beware of triggers. Go in your own vehicle so you are not stuck being dependent on someone else's terms and always map out an escape route. You may need one.
- Be kind to yourself
- The death of a loved one does not prepare you for the death of the next loved one.
- Grief can bring physical pain.
- People may play a strange little game called "I hurt the most." It will consume them, and they may simply fail to see the grief in others.
- Grief lasts a lot longer than sympathy.