



Top 3 Questions I'm asked about Grief

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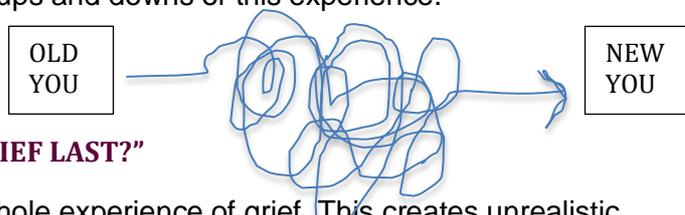
For more than 30 years I've been talking to grieving people and there are some questions they always ask - all age groups, male and female, all kinds of losses. Usually they want to know that they're not going crazy. Grief is not well understood in our society so I'm not surprised that we often don't understand ourselves when we're grieving. Nor do our family and friends often know what to say and do to help. It's not a smooth road to travel - no wonder we can feel confused, anxious, fearful and wonder if we will ever get through this.

QUESTION # 1 "AM I NORMAL?"

The reactions, feelings, behaviours and thoughts you have when you are grieving are often so intense that grieving people diagnose themselves as 'not coping' or 'not normal'.

The truth is, grief can be overwhelming. It can make you do and say things that are out of character. It's wise to remember that you are going through an experience that is NOT the norm for you – dealing with the death of someone close or experiencing an unwelcome loss that's changed your life – were not on your radar. So this can be unfamiliar territory for you.

There will be all kinds of adjustments which have to be made in your life - and these could bring uncertainty, frustration, fear, sadness and change as each new day comes along. You will change. Your routine will change. Your moods will change. All of this is called 'grief'. It's really about adapting to changes in your life, your thoughts, your hopes, your beliefs and your future - this means a 'new you' will emerge from the ups and downs of this experience.



QUESTION # 2 "HOW LONG WILL THIS GRIEF LAST?"

It's best not to put a time frame on the whole experience of grief. This creates unrealistic expectations and doesn't allow for individual differences. However, this may not stop the people around you urging you to 'put it behind you and get on with your life'. This is often easier said than done. You will get through your grief in your own good time not when others tell you that you should be over it. Their discomfort and difficulty in understanding your grief says much more about them than it does about you.

Some grieving people will wait for time to heal. But this doesn't get them very far. You will need to deal with your feelings and face the changes in your life - there's just no easy way out of it.

QUESTION # 3 "WILL I EVER GET OVER THIS?"

Grief isn't something you 'get over'. It might seem unbelievable now, but most people learn to adjust to their loss. You can do this too. This doesn't mean that your grief will be 'cured' or that you should forget the person who has died. Even in years to come there might be occasions when you will still feel sad. There will always be reminders and memory triggers that could make you emotional. There will always be family occasions when someone special is missing.

What is probably the difference, when you have moved through your grief, is that the loss is not the total preoccupation of your thoughts. Your energy for living will return. There will be no need to put on a happy face to please others - you will be able to smile again because you really want to. Life will be different, but that doesn't mean you can't appreciate it again.

Doris Zagdanski is the Convenor of MyGriefAssist website. She is a leading figure in modern day grief and loss education. These three questions are adapted from her book 'Now That The Funeral Is Over – a common sense guide for grieving people' www.allaboutgrief.com