

“Claiming My ‘Peace’ of Heaven in 2011”

Today’s Lesson

Five Common Myths

PowerPoint notes available at:

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Five Common Myths



Grief...

A normal and healthy emotion that occurs when you lose someone or something important.

Five Common Myths



While grief is fresh, every attempt to divert only irritates. You must wait till it be digested, and then amusement will dissipate the remains of it.
~ Samuel Johnson

Five Common Myths



There are things that we don't want to happen but have to accept, things we don't want to know but have to learn, and people we can't live without but have to let go.

~ Author Unknown

Five Common Myths



If you're going through hell, keep going. ~Winston Churchill

We acquire the strength we have overcome. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Time is a physician that heals every grief. ~Diphilus

Five Common Myths

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote about the five stages we all go through when dealing with loss:

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance

Five Common Myths

In their book, *The Five Stages of Grief*, Elisabeth Kübler-Ross & David Kessler write:

Denial helps us to survive the loss. In this stage, the world becomes meaningless and overwhelming. Life makes no sense. We are in a state of shock and denial. We go numb. We wonder how we can go on, if we can go on, why we should go on. We try to find a way to simply get through each day.

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Denial and shock help us to cope and make survival possible. Denial helps us to pace our feelings of grief. There is a grace in denial. It is nature's way of letting in only as much as we can handle.

As you accept the reality of the loss and start to ask yourself questions, you are unknowingly beginning the healing process. You are becoming stronger, and the denial is beginning to fade. But as you proceed, all the feelings you were denying begin to surface.

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Anger

Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. Be willing to feel your anger, even though it may seem endless. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal. There are many other emotions under the anger and you will get to them in time, but anger is the emotion we are most used to managing. The truth is that anger has no limits.

Five Common Myths

Anger

It can extend not only to your friends, the doctors, your family, yourself and your loved one who died, but also to God. You may ask, "Where is God in this?"

Underneath anger is pain, your pain. It is natural to feel deserted and abandoned, but we live in a society that fears anger. Anger is strength and it can be an anchor, giving temporary structure to the nothingness of loss. At first grief feels like being lost at sea: no connection to anything.

Five Common Myths

Anger

Then you get angry at someone, maybe a person who didn't attend the funeral, maybe a person who isn't around, maybe a person who is different now that your loved one has died. Suddenly you have a structure -- your anger toward them. The anger becomes a bridge over the open sea, a connection from you to them. It is something to hold onto; and a connection made from the strength of anger feels better than nothing.

Five Common Myths

Bargaining

Before a loss, it seems like you will do anything if only your loved one would be spared. "Please God," you bargain, "I will never be angry at my wife again if you'll just let her live." After a loss, bargaining may take the form of a temporary truce. "What if I devote the rest of my life to helping others. Then can I wake up and realize this has all been a bad dream?"

Five Common Myths

Bargaining

We become lost in a maze of “If only...” or “What if...” statements. We want life returned to what is was; we want our loved one restored. We want to go back in time: find the tumor sooner, recognize the illness more quickly, stop the accident from happening...if only, if only, if only. Guilt is often bargaining’s companion. The “if onlys” cause us to find fault in ourselves and what we “think” we could have done differently. We may even bargain with the pain. We will do anything not to feel the pain of this loss.

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Bargaining

We remain in the past, trying to negotiate our way out of the hurt. People often think of the stages as lasting weeks or months. They forget that the stages are responses to feelings that can last for minutes or hours as we flip in and out of one and then another. We do not enter and leave each individual stage in a linear fashion. We may feel one, then another and back again to the first one.

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Depression

After bargaining, our attention moves squarely into the present. Empty feelings present themselves, and grief enters our lives on a deeper level, deeper than we ever imagined. This depressive stage feels as though it will last forever. It’s important to understand that this depression is not a sign of mental illness. It is the appropriate response to a great loss. We withdraw from life, left in a fog of intense sadness, wondering, perhaps, if there is any point in going on alone? Why go on at all?

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Depression

Depression after a loss is too often seen as unnatural: a state to be fixed, something to snap out of. The first question to ask yourself is whether or not the situation you’re in is actually depressing. The loss of a loved one is a very depressing situation, and depression is a normal and appropriate response. To not experience depression after a loved one dies would be unusual. If grief is a process of healing, then depression is one of the many necessary steps along the way.

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Acceptance

Acceptance is often confused with the notion of being “all right” or “OK” with what has happened. This is not the case. Most people don’t ever feel OK or all right about the loss of a loved one. This stage is about accepting the reality that our loved one is physically gone and recognizing that this new reality is the permanent reality.

Five Common Myths

Acceptance

We will never like this reality or make it OK, but eventually we accept it. We learn to live with it. It is the new norm with which we must learn to live. We must try to live now in a world where our loved one is missing. In resisting this new norm, at first many people want to maintain life as it was before a loved one died.

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Acceptance

In time, through bits and pieces of acceptance, however, we see that we cannot maintain the past intact. It has been forever changed and we must readjust. We must learn to reorganize roles, re-assign them to others or take them on ourselves. As we begin to live again and enjoy our life, we often feel that in doing so, we are betraying our loved one. We can never replace what has been lost, but we can make new connections, new meaningful relationships, new inter-dependencies.

Five Common Myths

Author and minister, Victor Parachin wrote about five myths of grief that people who have suffered a loss deal with:

Myth #1 states: "It's been a year since your spouse has died. Don't you think you should be dating by now?"

Human beings are not goldfish. For some people it takes a long time say good-bye and until it has been said, its impossible to move on to a new relationship that will be complete and satisfying.

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Myth #2 states: "You look so well!"

Many of us have "put on a happy face" during a trying time in our lives. For a person who has just lost a loved one, they may appear to look great, but on the inside they are experiencing a wide range of chaotic emotions: shock, numbness, anger, disbelief, betrayal, rage, regret, remorse, guilt. Thus, when people comment in astonishment, "You look so well!" *the griever feels misunderstood and further isolated. A more helpful response would be, "I can only image what you are feeling right now, how can I help, what can I do?"*

Five Common Myths

Myth #3 states: "You need to be more active and get our more!"

To encourage someone to maintain their social, civic, and religious ties is healthy. To withdraw completely and stay isolated does not help to heal the grief. And neither does the constant and excessive activity of staying busy and going out to "escape" the grieving process. What people don't understand is that one is not lonely for the presence of people, they are lonely for the presence of their loved one.

Five Common Myths

Myth #4 states: "The best thing we can do for the bereaved is to avoid discussing their loss."

The bereaved need and want to talk about their loss. For some only a short time and for others a longer time is needed. Talking helps them to work through the emotions of guilt, anger, rage, and regret they may have. These emotions need to be released and talking about their loss allows them to get it out. Every time they have a chance to talk they release another layer of toxic emotion.

Five Common Myths

Myth #5 states: "She cries a lot. I'm concerned she is going to have a nervous breakdown."

Have you ever noticed that when a person starts to cry someone will rush to their side, and say something like, "Now there, its okay, don't cry, everything will be alright, you'll see." Tears are nature's safety valves. Crying washes away toxins from the body that are produced during stress and trauma.

Have you ever noticed how good you felt after you had one of those deep soul cleansing cries? Crying discharges and relieves the central nervous system to tension. If we don't allow ourselves to cry the toxins created during stress and trauma get stored in the body and manifest themselves as a "dis-ease" later on.

Five Common Myths



Grieving is a necessary passage and a difficult transition to finally letting go of sorrow - it is not a permanent rest stop.

~Dodinsky

Our losses are not periods, but commas in this journey we call life.