



# Grief: Journey of Healing

■ by Kim Pronoitis, MA, LCPC

At first it seems surreal, as if one is present, or not. Grief is like a dense barrier between you and the world as you once knew it. You may wonder how long the feeling is going to last as time moves on and the world moves forward, as this heaviness has become a part of your everyday life and consumes your every moment. All you may want is to feel “normal” again, or to just hit the rewind button. However, this is a new existence, and what does this new existence mean?

## What Is Grief?

Grief has many facets, and one may ask what grief is. Grief cannot be confined into one area and is defined in many ways. It is a feeling of permanence, whether relating to a lost relationship, a job, or a natural disaster. Recently, we as a society have lost life as we once knew it due to the pandemic. The same freedom that we once had seems to have dissipated, and people seem to have changed. However, we do know that there is light at the end of the tunnel. For us as Christians, we are given hope and the freedom through Christ that we can move forward and have peace again. In 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, Paul writes, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”

In the 1969 model of Kübler-Ross, more commonly known as the five stages of grief, there are five different stages in which we experience grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. However, one may or may not process grief this way. There is no one way to process grief, and one can go back and forth with these feelings.

As many of us struggle with “letting go”, there comes the fear of that letting go, especially with the loss of a loved one. There is the fear of forgetting. As parents, we think that our children will outlive us. One cannot imagine the pain and agony a parent may go through with the loss of a child. In Psalm 34:18, we know that “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.” One of the biggest fears we may experience is the fear that friends and family will stop thinking of a child we lost, in essence forgetting them as they once were. As a parent, one can feel alone and isolated and fear that the memories will be crowded out.

## Keeping the Memories Alive

On the contrary, we can keep our loved one alive in memory. There are many things we can do to keep the memory of a loved one alive. One thing we can do is to keep a diary of the person we lost. We can remember the personality: We write down the specifics,

- Continued on Page 2 -

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- Continued from Page 1 -

the funny quirks, the vivid imagination, and the endless creativity. Some of the many things one can do to keep the memory of a loved one alive are:

- Create a scrap or memory book
- Feel connected through storytelling of memories
- Start a new tradition honoring the person
- Create a memory pillow or quilt with old clothes
- Plant a memory tree

Sometimes one can fear moving forward or have feelings of guilt as if we were going to forget that person. Starting to live life and let go again doesn't mean that we love that person any less. As Christians, we believe that this earth is not our final destination. The spirit of a loved one will always live on.



## Seasons and Purpose

In grieving the loss of a relationship, we have to look perhaps at how healthy the relationship may have been. Some relationships can be toxic, and for various reasons, relationships can come to a close. We have to ask ourselves if the specific relationship was allowing us to be the best version of ourselves that we were meant to be. As we walk through this journey of life on this earth, there can be relationships that we may walk through during a season. This could relate to a job or even the recent pandemic. We have to remember, this is just a detour on our path. Depending on how we look at things, there can be many different outcomes.

As a Christian therapist, I find it healthy to grasp the deeper meaning of purpose. We don't always know the reasons of why, but we do know that God's ways aren't always ours. We do know that with His glory and good it works accordingly. It is through these growing pains that we are transitioning into what God wants us to be. It's going through hardships, pain, and difficult experiences that we can also help others.

John 14:27 states, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." As Christians, we know that the ways of the world are not always God's ways. However, no one can take your faith away — all we have to do is take His hand. ■

Kim Pronoitis, MA, LCPC is a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor and sees clients in our Orland Park, IL, location.



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