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Chapters

turning the pages through grief



What's Your Comfort Zone?

Written by Paulette LeBlanc
Photo by Sabri Tuzcu on Unsplash

You may feel as though death has just stolen your reality, not unlike the tiny villages Godzilla destroyed underfoot. As you wander around aimlessly, trying to survey the damage, you may be wondering how, why, or even if, you'll ever manage to rebuild. If possible, now is the time to let others help, comfort, and even do a little of the surveying for you. It's important to figure out your particular comfort in grieving.

Unless the death of your loved one dictates otherwise, it's best not to make any sudden movements just yet.

Don't be afraid to let others, whom you trust, make some of the major decisions with you. When my mother died, my father's knee-jerk reaction was to move. He was in no condition emotionally to go and get settled into a new place, so I encouraged him to stay with me until he could see clearly again. He and my mother had moved into my home while she was dying, so that I could take care of her. After she

died, his first thought was that he was now in my way, and should just go off by himself. Though it was difficult to convince him at first, that he was not imposing, but simply needed some time to be still and grieve, eventually he came around.

The sitting still part is not easy for everyone. I have a dear friend who lost his young daughter in a tragic accident. He found that sitting still only triggered more feelings of loss and instead he went out to work almost immediately after her death. He worked 12 to 13 hour days in an effort to avoid becoming overwhelmed by his

own grief. He continued to do this for years after her death, insisting that keeping his mind busy is what got him through what was arguably the worst grief he had ever known. While my father found some comfort in being still for a bit and letting the family care for him, my friend would have gone mad simply being still. The season of life we are in, along with the basic makeup of our personality generally dictates our journey through grief. In other words,

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"You should sit down for this. Are you sitting down?
Are your feet up? Got a pillow? Are you cold?
Do you have an afghan? Do you want to grab a snack?"

APRIL
2019



*Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness.
The only cure for grief is to grieve.*

— Earl Grollman

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workers will work, thinkers will think, talkers will likely want to talk through their feelings. There simply is no one right answer to grieving.

Conversely, you may find that doing the same old thing doesn't fit quite right. In that case, taking up something new may be exactly the right way for you to express your grief. You may even have two different experiences simultaneously. Sometimes talking about our grief with a stranger is more comforting than speaking with someone who knew that person well. This allows us to express our views and opinions of them and our relationship with them, without the interference of the listener's pre-conceived ideas of the deceased, or what they meant to us.

Don't be afraid to be a little selfish in your grief. After all, my father's experience of

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losing my mother was very different from mine. While we shared our memories and loss often, I know my father found it comforting to talk about her with people who never knew her, so that he could share his own view of who she was and what she had meant to

him. I found myself doing the same thing, as I viewed my mother from my own perspective. It was comforting to be able to speak to people who didn't know her, about what our relationship was like, and at the same time, comforting to share with my father the things that people outside the family would not have known about her.

One thing is certain—your grief is yours alone, and no one can dictate what will comfort you through it. Remember to let others do what you cannot and be kind to yourself through this journey.

* footnotes

Finding Support for Your Grief



by Bill Hoy

Many people have caring family members or a network of close friends who provide support in grief. Often, however, that support begins to disappear a few weeks or months after the death. This makes sense since most of these people did not have the same level of relationship with your loved one that you had. For people who think they could use just a little more support, a grief group can be a huge help.

How do I know a group might be for me? If you feel a person who has experienced a similar loss might better understand your needs, a grief group is a great place to find such friends.

Where do I look for a group? Hospices, hospitals, faith communities, senior centers, and funeral homes are just a few of the organizations that either provide groups of their own or refer their constituents to groups in the community.

When will I know I don't need the group any longer? It is unlikely you will ever overstay your welcome in a grief group; people who lead groups understand that bereavement is experienced in a wide variety of ways.

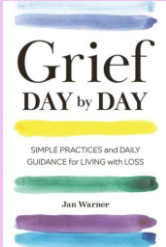
Bereavement groups come in all shapes and sizes. Even if you attend a group that does not seem to “fit” you, try attending at least two or three times. Soon enough, you will know if you connect with this group of people and will be able to discern whether the group will work for you.

Paulette LeBlanc is an author, editor and freelance writer, who currently resides on the Gulf Coast of Florida. She has articles published with Union Gospel Press. In 2019, her book “Consuming Fire” (Wipf and Stock) was released.

* Dr. Bill Hoy teaches at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He is widely regarded as an authority on the sociocultural history of funeral rites, the topic of his most recent book: *Do Funerals Matter: The Purposes and Practices of Death Rituals in Global Perspective* (Routledge, 2013).

Grief Day By Day: Simple Practices and Daily Guidance for Living with Loss

by Jan Warner



In *Grief Day by Day*, Jan Warner draws on her own extensive experience and the experiences of the 2 million followers on her “Grief Speaks Out” Facebook page to offer hope in its most practical form. This book does not look to offer a solution to grief. Rather, it provides supportive, useful guidance to help you create a life in which peace, and even gratitude, can coexist with your grief.

Inside the pages of *Grief Day by Day* you'll find:

- **365 Daily Reflections** that include quotes, meditations, and other musings on grief
- **Weekly Themes** that capture common feelings and experiences such as: Loneliness, Things Left Unsaid, Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms, Guilt, and Intimacy
- **52 Healing Exercises** that help you process your feelings at the end of each week and develop skills for coping with grief as it arises

(Amazon Review)

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