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Chapters

turning the pages through grief



GRIEVING

Written by
Paulette LeBlanc

with

GUILT



Death does not always afford us the opportunity to say goodbye, or to grab that last hug or kiss. What do we do know, when we never got to make up from that last argument? Or worse, what if the relationship was in disrepair and we'd been thinking of walking away from that person, and then they died instead?

Years ago, a friend of mine found out she had an issue with her heart. She is older than I am, in fact, enough older that she has always been like a mother to me. At the time that she found out about her heart, her teenage daughter was going through a very rebellious phase. My friend pulled me aside one day to ask me to please explain to her daughter that if something happened to her and she died, that her daughter needn't feel guilty. She said to tell her that it was a very age-appropriate

phase and she should be afforded the luxury of becoming angry with her mother without feeling guilty for the rest of her life if her mother died in the midst of that phase. I was in my 20s at the time, and I remember thinking about how wise that statement was. She didn't die and they both got through that phase with their relationship unscathed, just as my friend had hoped.

A number of years later another friend of mine lost her husband in the midst of a horrible season of their marriage. He died suddenly and my friend became lost in her own guilt for having had fleeting thoughts about ending the relationship while he was still alive. I told her a number of times that marriages go through rough seas sometimes and every married person should be afforded the luxury of becoming angry with their spouse, without feeling guilty for the rest of their life if that person died in the midst of the storm.

While most of us would agree that

continued...



"You go ahead, I'm gonna stay up a little longer."

**JUNE
2019**



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

* footnotes

Dealing with the Guilt of Grief



by Bill Hoy

Though often not understood by those who haven't suffered a significant loss, guilt is a common aspect of grief, experienced by a large number of grieving people. We sense guilt over words said or not said, actions taken or not taken. "If I had only called the paramedics sooner" or "If I just had not said those cruel things to him" are the regrets that lead to some sense of guilt on our part.

Most grieving people who experience pangs of guilt don't really need a technical description of what it is; what we need is a remedy so here are some ideas that may help.

Set regret in the context of relationship. Finding regrettable events and conversations is not hard because living in relationship means we sometimes do or say offensive things

Ask forgiveness. Though your loved one isn't physically here to ask his or her forgiveness, you can certainly still ask

Receive forgiveness. A big part of becoming free from guilt is learning to accept the forgiveness offered by others (and by God) as well as learning to forgive oneself.

Make amends. Where possible, make amends for the wrong you perceive you have done

Seek the advice of a professional. Grief is best when shared with others. The insight and direction of a mental health professional or member of the clergy might be very helpful for you at this point.

While guilt is common in grief, it is useful only in the ways it teaches us how to relate in more effective ways.

* 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).

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these non-guilt statements are true, in the finality of death, it can be extremely difficult to assuage the guilt we feel for not getting it right with someone who has died. Our brains tend to focus on and process every good thing that person has ever done, in light of the fact that we will never see or talk to them again. For this reason, I often listen to my friend talk about her late husband, whom I dearly loved, but most times I am sure to remind her of what a pain he was too. I point out the things he did that most annoyed her and we usually have a good laugh about it.

It's a natural thing to feel a certain amount of guilt when someone dies in the midst of a rainy part of your relationship with him or her. It is perfectly healthy to acknowledge this—just be sure to move past it. The same way it is perfectly natural to grieve someone who has died, to fall in love, to feel the empty nest when your children have grown. Life offers us many different seasons, but not one of them is meant to be permanent. This is why they are called, seasons, and not home.

I don't know that my friend will ever feel completely guilt free since her husband died, but I will continue to remind her that he was as perfect as he was imperfect, and any feelings, good or bad, were simply a part of life.

No matter who you've lost, or what was going on in your relationship with them—please remember to be kind to yourself in this time of grieving.

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Life offers us many different seasons, but not one of them is meant to be permanent.

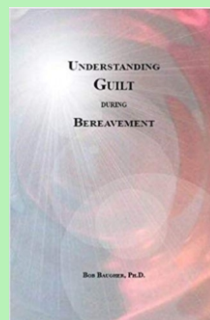
Paulette LeBlanc is an author, editor and freelance writer, who currently resides on the Gulf Coast of Florida. She has articles published with Union Gospel Press. In 2019, her book "Consuming Fire" (Wipf and Stock) was released.

Understanding Guilt During Bereavement

By Bob Baugher ph.D.

The first half of this 53-page book describe the guilt process, including 14 types of guilt that may occur during the bereavement process.

The remainder offers 22 suggestions for



bookmark

copied with guilt. This book will not tell you not to feel guilty. It is written to help bereaved people gain insight into their guilt feelings and to begin the process of moving beyond the heavy burden of guilt. Includes short stories.

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