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Chapters

turning the pages through grief

**HE WAS
ESTRANGED
FOR
YEARS**



How Am I
Supposed to
Feel Now
That He's
Gone?

By
Lori Jean

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Lori Jean
is a writer and
video essayist
from southern
Minnesota

You know what? It's ok that he's dead. There I said it. He was miserable for many years. He shunned all who reached out to help him. He caused untold misery on his wonderful parents, and confusion and frustration for his siblings. His death closes a sad chapter on a sad guy. He no longer has to suffer his lonely, estranged life with all the shades drawn, and now everyone can move on."

My friend confessed this to me as we waxed philosophical about grieving, or perhaps not grieving, the death of those for whom death was a liberator of sorts. How do we grieve the estranged? Those we don't miss because they were never there, or quit being there, in the first place? The intricate cocktail of emotions surrounding death is already heavy to swallow. Carrying a sense of guilt over not feeling like grieving can be confusing at best.

The first time I remember experiencing this I was

quite young. Growing up, my uncle was always wreaking havoc on our lives. He was a Vietnam vet, rattled with drug addiction and anger. I remember as a little girl my heart would pound in my throat every time we had to visit the strange neon sign business that he ran and then bankrupted. In hindsight, it was likely the town drug den. Just when my grandpa found him a new job and we thought his life was back on track, he shot himself. I'll forever carry the shock of staring wide eyed at the VFW baseball cap on his head in the casket, knowing it was covering the bullet hole that ended his miserable existence.

Likely if a person you've been estranged from dies, you've already grieved the loss of your relationship while they were still living. So when you get "the call," there is simply no reaction. You may not be fazed. You may not cry. Or you may not feel anything but a shrug of the shoulders and a "what's for dinner?" And there isn't a darn thing wrong with you for that. The emotional weight you place on a relationship can't be quantified in a

continued...

**JULY
2024**



"We end up being strangers to those who have known us for too long."

—Luigina Sgarro

Just sit with your thoughts as if a passive observer and notice the entire range of thoughts that pop up in your mind.

neat and tidy way.

Ambivalent grieving can be the result of a number of factors: estrangement, unresolved feelings, lack of contact before death, or an abusive or psychologically traumatic relationship. If you number yourself among those who have experienced ambivalence while grieving, know that you are not peculiar for this. Allow space

in your mind for the entire range of thoughts and feelings that accompany the subject of death—including no feelings at all.

Practicing mindfulness can be a helpful antidote to any judgment you feel of yourself for having what you might label the “wrong” feelings. Just sit with your thoughts as if a passive observer and notice the entire range of thoughts that pop up in your mind. When a particular feeling such as guilt or shame arises with a thought, remind yourself “it’s just a thought.” It isn’t the truth, it isn’t good or bad, and there’s nothing to do with it. Thoughts are just thoughts, feelings are just feelings, and you aren’t a bad person just for having them. Simply allow it all, and the “moving on” part will unfold without needing to do (or not do) anything at all.

What Grief Has Taught Me...

Grief is seen as embarrassing and weak. So few people understand that time, gentleness, and kindness, are the things that should be offered to the bereaved.

Therapists can be absolutely wonderful or absolutely terrible depending on whether they actually understand grief. Thankfully I finally found a good one.

That EVERYTHING has changed forever.

whatsyourgrief.com

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Sometimes the best advice is a break from advice. Enjoy your favorite beverage and these tidbits of this & that.



• July was named after the famous Roman general **Julius Caesar**; it was selected by the Roman senate, being the month he was born in.

• It is sometimes called the **Hay**

month because the grass dries out due to a lack of rain and can be made into hay.



• July’s birth stone, the **ruby**, is often associated with contentment, love, passion, and integrity.



• In early July, a period of time called the “**dog days of summer**” begins. Historically they were observed within Ancient Roman and Greek astrology and were connected with bad luck, mad dog attacks, unexpected thunderstorms, heat, and drought. Nowadays, “the dog days” refers to when the hottest days of summer begin.

• July has some pretty delicious month-long observances, too! In the US, at least there are three, in particular, that stand out – It’s National Watermelon Month, National Hot Dog Month, and National Ice Cream Month.



FAST FOOD

It can be difficult to think about cooking, or even eating sometimes, when we are grieving. Good nutrition is especially important now, and these quick and easy ideas may help.

BREAKFAST CEREAL

What can be easier than pouring a bowl of quick and satisfying cereal? Steer clear of high sugar fare and opt for whole grains and low sugar varieties. This is where label reading is very important. There are more options today than ever to choose from.

