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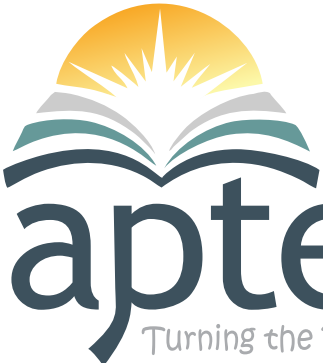
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Chapters

Turning the Pages through Grief

The Many Layers OF LIFE

By
Eileen
Madsen

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Chapters Newsletter

I read an article recently insisting that, on our deathbeds, we should realize that life is about the relationships we had, not the diplomas, not the money, or the cars, or the nice house, etc. And we've all seen the wall plaques that tell us what to appreciate, when to slow down, and of course to live, laugh and love whether we want to or not. I take exception to this on a few levels.

Life has many layers of what we do, enjoy, experience. It really isn't up to anyone else to say what you should or should not value. Besides, it isn't that simple.

Yes, our relationships are very important, some more than others of course, and naturally we value them. But life is about just that—*life* and all that it entails. We should never be shamed into appreciating the other things that have brought satisfaction in our lives.

Maybe that college degree was hard won, and that time spent in school allowed for a wonderful, successful, and meaningful career. Didn't that sports car bring years of enjoyment and exploration zipping around the countryside with a good pal or spouse? And making money can bring a certain amount of freedom, for ourselves, and our children, not to mention being able to pay bills. Plus, who doesn't take some amount of pride in their home—it's where all those relationships that we are told to appreciate take place. That comfy couch where we hang out under a blanket with a significant other, game night at grandma's table, the big screen TV where our kids gather with friends.

"Things" can more than just plastic, paper or metal—they can be a catalyst to all those memories we are making.

continued...

MAY
2026



"All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt."
—Charles M. Schulz



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When one holds that diploma, front door key, checkbook, or steering wheel, aren't we indeed virtually holding the people connected to it all? Aren't we maybe even proud of ourselves and the work, talent and determination it took to make those things happen?

Of course, no one is saying to worship cash, or neglect your loved ones to sleep in your BMW in the garage, or get high and mighty over a master's degree when your best friend has an associate's. My point is that being told what is the proper way to feel, or who and what to appreciate, especially on one's death bed, or witnessing someone on theirs, is an unnecessary burden at the worst possible time. The last thing one needs is a guilt trip.

No, you can't take it with you. But you also can't take your family, spouse, or friends with you either. Even if those life-advice platitudes are wood-burned onto plaques and sold by the millions, it doesn't mean you have to buy it, literally or figuratively.

So yes, take time to appreciate your family and friends, give your pets some extra attention, polish that car, hang up your diploma, live, laugh, love in the way that feels right for you. Then maybe take those plaques to the thrift shop.



"You know what? Yes. Go ahead. Live a little!"

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE PUBLISHED IN CHAPTERS NEWSLETTER?

Share your grief story in 500 words or less and be considered for publication in an upcoming issue of Chapters. Email your essay to Eileen Madsen at chaptersnewsletter@comcast.net.



TYPES OF GRIEF: THE 16 WAYS PEOPLE GRIEVE

1. **NORMAL GRIEF** - *The emotional distress that accompanies a trauma, such as death or other loss*
2. **COMPLICATED GRIEF** - *The type of grief that worsens over time*
3. **TRAUMATIC GRIEF** - *The grief that you feel after the sudden or unexpected loss of a loved one*
4. **CHRONIC GRIEF** - *A grief that does not subside*
5. **ANTICIPATORY GRIEF** - *The grief you feel when you are waiting for your loved on to pass*
6. **DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF** - *Deep grief you feel over the loss of a relationship that is outside the typical family structure or other recognized relationships*
7. **DISTORTED GRIEF** - *May give you feelings of guilt and anger*
8. **EXAGGERATED GRIEF** - *Start out as normal grief but grow with intensity as time passes*
9. **MASKED GRIEF** - *When experienced, you may not even be aware that symptoms such as anger or impulsive behavior are related to a loss*
10. **INHIBITED GRIEF** - *Can manifest in the form of chronic headaches, stomach pains, or even muscle and body aches*
11. **COLLECTIVE GRIEF** - *When grief affects a whole community, city, country, or even the world*
12. **CUMULATIVE GRIEF** - *When a current loss may dredge up feelings of a loss you have suffered in the past*
13. **PROLONGED GRIEF** - *When normal grief lasts for 12 months or longer*
14. **ABBREVIATED GRIEF** - *A short lived but bona fide grief*
15. **DELAYED GRIEF** - *When your grief may be postponed for a matter of weeks, months and sometimes years*
16. **ABSENT GRIEF** - *Where you may show few or no signs of grieving*

? What type of grief most describes what you are experiencing

To learn more about the way you are grieving and tips on how to deal with it we invite you to visit www.usurnsonline.com/grief-loss/types-of-grief.