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Chapters

turning the pages through grief

HOW IS THIS fair?



By
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Madsen

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Chapters Newsletter

I was recently at the worst funeral of my life. Well, really, is there a best funeral? This one hit home more than any other, even ones that involved my own family thus far.

My best friend lost his spouse out of the blue, right in front of him. In 30 seconds his soul mate went from checking on emails to checking out from life. The person with whom he spent nearly four decades laughing, talking smart, hanging out, and planning for retirement. You know, normal stuff.

While I know life isn't fair, this seemed exceptionally not fair. You see, my friend was diagnosed the year prior with an illness that he may, in all likelihood, succumb to eventually. But it wasn't he who died. What the actual... heck? Not that I wanted my best friend to be the one who passed, but the overwhelming

shock of him being left behind without his partner on top of everything he'd been through with cancer treatments, and the uncertainty of his future, seemed a particularly cruel blow. My anger about this was off the charts. Yea, I know, one of the stages of grief. Just stop. Let me be mad. I need to be mad.

The memorial went from gut wrenching to humorous story-telling. The brain is funny that way.

I mean, there is only so much grief a person can take. There's the sniffing and crumpled faces, the hunched shoulders and stunned expressions. And the black suits... so... official in a "here I am in my grieving attire" way. Even now the memory of the singer, who over-earnestly belted out a familiar hymn, echoes in my head—and at the time I just wanted him to quit singing. Be normal. This isn't right.

continued...



Let come what comes, let go what goes.
See what remains.
—Ramana Maharshi



...continued from front

But grief isn't normal. As in, it isn't something we normally do on a daily basis. And I guess that's a good thing. It's as not normal as shopping for funeral outfits. Or wearing shoes that sit in your closet only to stuff one's feet into for these solemn occasions where we take leave of our fashion senses. We crave normal. After this particular service I couldn't wait to rip off my sedate tan blazer, my appropriate undergarments, remove the mascara that I only put on for special occasions, pour myself a glass of wine and properly grieve in shorts and a tee shirt, wandering through the flowers and plants in my yard. Granted, the neighbors seemed a bit perplexed watching me blubbering amongst the begonias, but there, I felt a less official grief. A real heartbreak. A truly sincere sad.

Is there some deep meaning in this? Only what you may take from it. There's no right or wrong way to grieve. I can only speak, or sob, for myself. But maybe you can relate to something here, and sort through you own discombobulation when death shows up asking you to go clothes shopping. Or, ideally, for a walk in the yard. See you there.

How To Survive
EARLY
GRIEF

8 SIMPLE RULES FOR
IMPOSSIBLE TIMES

1

STAY SAFE

Do it for yourself if you can. Do it for others if you must. If you're driving while crying too hard to see straight, pull over. Distraught driving is dangerous.

2

TEND SOMETHING

Water the plants. Brush the animals. Send a care package. Focusing on others for a little while can help.

3

GET OUTSIDE

Being outside in a non-human world is a relief. The trees will not ask, "How are you really?" The wind does not care if you cry. There's a lot to be said for being in places that don't need anything from you.

4

DRINK WATER

Crying for months on end is really dehydrating. Please drink water. Your body needs it.

The first weeks and months after someone you love dies are a world unto their own. Your usual survival tactics won't work. Words of intended comfort just grate. Encouragement from others doesn't feel good.

POSITIVE THINKING AND PLATITUDES CAN'T HELP. THEY JUST CAN'T.

5

SHOWER

Really. You will feel just the tiniest bit better clean. The same goes for sweeping the floor or any other seemingly tedious or irrelevant task of hygiene.

6

MOVE

In whatever ways your body can move, move. It won't solve anything, but movement can help soothe your mind.

7

SAY NO - SAY YES

You can't afford any big drains on your energy, and you can't afford to miss too many ways to replenish it. Say no to things that are too much for you. Say yes to things that bring even a tiny bit of goodness.

8

EAT

Some people eat under stress. Some lose all interest in food. Some experience serious, lasting physical challenges due to their "grief diet." Small doses of healthy, nutrient dense food might be more easily tolerated by your mind & body than full meals.

The core parts of you, the ways you find solace and connection - these have not completely changed, though they may feel irrelevant. Grief pares things down.

YOU MAY JUST NEED TO EXPERIMENT A BIT.

Adding to this list, or creating a whole new one of your own can provide a road map inside this wholly disorienting time.

REAL SUPPORT FOR REAL PEOPLE.

REFUGE IN GRIEF

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The Lessons of Grief

"My dad has always said, "Well, no one is getting out of here alive." It has honestly helped me many times. Death is something we all have in common and we are eternally interconnected".
—Samantha C.

"Grief is never ending. A picture, music, a smell, a thought, a place... It always comes blowing in like a storm with memories that I cherish.."
—Maureen T.

BREAK TIME

Sometimes the best advice is a break from advice.
Take 5 and enjoy these tidbits of this & that.

- May Day is a celebration of the coming of summer and fertility, as well as labor day. The pagan name for May Day is Beltane, which translates to "day of fire."
- The Empire State Building opened on May 1, 1931, and the Golden Gate Bridge opened on May 27, 1937.



- May 2 is World Tuna Day, May 8 is No Socks Day, and May 14 is Dance Like a Chicken Day.



- May's full moon, called the Flower Moon, appears on Thursday, May 23, reaching peak illumination at 9:53 a.m. (EDT). It will be below the horizon at this time, so for the best view of this full Moon, step outside on the night of the 23 or the 24.

- May's birthstone, the emerald, symbolizes rebirth and fertility, and was thought to grant foresight, cure various diseases, soothe nerves, improve memory, and ensure loyalty.



"The artist's later years were marked by failing eyesight..."

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