



HOSPICE of LENAWEE

Myths and the Cure for Grief

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We Carry Your Heart in Our Heart

"Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity: the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve."

~Dr. Earl A. Grollman

Below are five myths that often cause people unnecessary anxiety and added discomfort as they grieve.

MYTH #1: GRIEF AND MOURNING ARE THE SAME

No. Grief is the thoughts and feelings a person experiences INSIDE. The internal meaning we place on a loss. Mourning is how we express ourselves externally. Often in our culture, it is acceptable to grieve, but not mourn. "Keep it to yourself." "Keep your chin up." To heal, people need to be able to both grieve and mourn.

MYTH #2: THERE IS A PREDICTABLE AND ORDERLY STAGE-LIKE PROGRESSION THAT MOURNERS GO THROUGH

No. A mourner's expression of grief is unique. It unfolds naturally - not in rigid stages. In fact, the grief journey is sometimes described as riding a rollercoaster blindfolded. Grief moments come when they come. Grief has no timetable. We are most helpful to others when we respect each person's unique way of mourning and even encourage them to mourn outwardly. Our place is not to minimize their grief.

MYTH #3: WE SHOULD TRY TO MOVE AWAY FROM GRIEF INSTEAD OF TOWARD IT

No. Running away from our grief prevents us from healing and many people do just that. No one likes to live with pain, sadness and hurt. What is important to understand is that though grieving and mourning may be painful, when accepted and even embraced, grieving is the very process that both heals and reconciles one to their loss.

MYTH #4: WE SHOULD HAVE THE GOAL OF "GETTING OVER" OUR GRIEF

Not really. We actually never fully "get over" any loss. In fact, we are forever changed because of the loss. Though we never fully get over our grief, we can be reconciled to it and live in our world in a new way with our "new reality." The intense soul wrenching pain of grief eventually moderates. A goal of grieving is to remember with less pain.

MYTH #5: TEARS EXPRESSING OUR GRIEF ARE SIGNS OF WEAKNESS

No. For many people tears are socially embarrassing. Others often feel uncomfortable in the presence of a grieving person. Although people may want to protect the griever from pain or themselves from being uncomfortable, tears are nature's way of releasing internal tension in the body as well as allowing the mourner to communicate their need to be comforted. Want to gift a griever? Encourage them to wear their tears proudly.

Source: Dr. Alan Wolfelt "Dispelling 5 Common Myths About Grief" (Thanatos, Fall 1989, pgs. 25-28).