

# A CONVERSATION ABOUT GRIEF AND LOSS

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# WHAT IS GRIEF

Grief is what we may feel after a major loss. This could be experienced when someone is dying, someone has died, a pet has died, a relationship has ended, an important life goal and expectation has not been reached, not being able to do things you used to do. In essence, it is the *Loss of a hope, dream and expectation.*





# WHAT IS GRIEF

- Grief is the way we describe in 'short-hand' the complicated mixture of feelings, emotions, behaviours and physical reactions that a person may have, connected with the experience of a loss.
- Grief is expressed in a myriad of ways often with peaks and valleys and there is no right or wrong way to express these emotions.

# THE GRIEVING PERSON'S BILL OF RIGHTS

BILL OF RIGHTS



By Alan Wolfelt from his book *Understanding Grief*

1. You have the right to experience your own unique grief
2. You have the right to talk about your grief
3. You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions
4. You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits
5. You have the right to experience grief “attacks”
6. You have the right to make use of ritual



Grief and loss are personal, unique and often feels chaotic. To understand another person's grief is to first, understand your own grief stories.

In order to be an effective grief support companion, we have to learn how to suspend our own personal biases or experiences with grief and be open to receive the other person where they are at.



*“Trying to forget doesn’t work. In fact, its pretty much the same as remembering”. – Rebecca Stead*

# GRIEF SCAN

1. Acknowledge key Losses in your life
2. Look into your heart and ask yourself what you are feeling
3. Touch this
4. Feel it
5. Make friends with your feelings



*“We think that the point is to pass the test or overcome the problem, but the truth is that things don’t really get solved. They come together and they all apart. Then they come together again and fall apart again....The healing comes from letting there be room for all of this to happen; room for grief, for relief, for misery, for joy. – Pema Chodron*





# ACKNOWLEDGE

The most important thing is to acknowledge, listen and be present in the moment without discarding the person's feelings.

*“In a dark time, the eye  
begins to see”.*

- Theodore Roethke



# ASK IF

- This person is be heard, acknowledged and loved.
- you are offering empathic compassion, along with kindness of touch? Are you offering the gift of companioning?
- This can only be done if you have touched your own pain and recognize what we all universally need.

*“What happens when you let go, when your strength leaves you and you sink into darkness, when there’s nothing that you can or anyone else can do, no matter how desperate you are, no matter how you try? Perhaps it’s then, when you have neither pride nor power, that you are saved, brought to an unimaginably great reward”.*

*- Mark Halperin*



# PRACTICAL TOOLS IN SUPPORTING ANOTHER PERSON



1. We live in a “FIX IT” culture. We need to practise and learn how to sit with a person rather than JUMP out of it.
2. Helping someone discover the meaning to go on to the next day.
3. Death, Grief and Loss are Spiritual Journeys of the Heart and Soul
4. The journey of the heart is when you ‘companion someone’ or ‘walk with them and their heart’.
5. Create a safe place to explore “The Wilderness of Grief” and explore their new reality.
6. Honour their story. This requires neither judgment nor opinion.

# PRACTICAL TOOLS IN SUPPORTING ANOTHER PERSON

7. Walking with someone gives space to reconciling their grief - not necessarily resolving it.
8. True support requires not being afraid of being empathic. The key here is bringing forward your compassion.
9. BE A HEART WITH LOVING EARS.
10. Visit regularly your OWN GRIEF experiences and how your heart was expressed. Learn from this. This will allow you to be more authentic in your support. Observe your own patterns. What worked - what did not work? What external issues influenced you? Observe what coping skills you lacked and what would have been helpful.



# PRACTICAL TOOLS IN SUPPORTING ANOTHER PERSON

11. WALKING WITH SOMEONE - especially in a professional capacity - allows and encourages reciprocal learning. Your OPEN HEART allows you to grow alongside them.
12. When you experience those moments of challenge or helplessness, come back to why you do what you do. Remember what inspires you.



People tell us that we have to let go of the person who has died.

They tell us that we have to let go of our grief.

Not possible. Can't be done. They are both part of us, forever. What we can - what we must - let go of is our need to control our grief. When we let ourselves go to our grief, when we surrender to it, when we relinquish our pride and our illusions of power and fully experience and express whatever we are thinking and feeling, we are saved.

- Center for Loss & Life Transition



*It is an honour to support another person  
through their grief and pain.*

*It is my hope that this grief can move closer  
to reconciliation and eventual joy.*

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