



A JOURNEY TOGETHER

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER OF THE BEREAVED PARENTS OF THE USA

FALL 2021

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Helping grieving parents and their families rebuild their lives following the death of a child.

what's
your
grief?

The Love We Only Find In Loss

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF : LITSA

It is nearly impossible to count the people who have shared their reflections on the relationship between grief and love. Just a few . . .

"Grief is the price you pay for love" -Colin Murray Parkes (later famously quoted by Queen Elizabeth II)

"Grief and love are two sides of the same coin" -a zillion people

"Grief can only exist where love lived first" – a zillion more people

"Grief is love with no place to go" – Jamie Anderson

Even Marvel got in on it recently:

"But what is grief, if not love persevering?" -Vision, Wandavision

We've even written about it here at WYG, in our article ["Grief is Love"](#).

Listing it out this way, it sounds quite pithy and cliché, doesn't it? It rings dangerously like something meant to round out the jagged edges of grief. I can imagine the rant of a griever, met with these sentiments from a well-intentioned friend at the wrong moment. These feel like a banal platitude, an effort to quell or distract from the immense pain of loss.

Yet grievers themselves articulate this same sentiment often – that grief is love. I have been thinking a lot lately about how love and grief, it isn't just a one-for-one exchange. It isn't that the exact same love we had for someone who was once living now transforms into the grief we have for them once they're gone. They consumed a space in our lives, they left a gaping hole, but grief feels somehow immensely bigger and greater than simply the hole. I think that might be why grievers talk about the relationship between love and grief in a different way than those offering banalities.

The Presence of Absence

Absence allows us to tap into a new depth of love, one we didn't know existed. It feels like a depth we simply couldn't access while they were still alive. It is a type of love predicated on the void they left in the world. When becoming a parent for the first time, so often people reach for words to explain that bringing

THE LOVE WE FIND IN LOSS

whatsyourgrief.com
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all my love for you
while you were alive



how big I thought
grief would be



how big
grief
actually is



the love we only
find in loss
(yearning, sehnsucht, saudade)

a child into the world has opened the door to a type of love they didn't know existed. Strange as it seems, I find myself believing that losing someone we love so deeply does something similar.

We've talked before about yearning in grief. Yearning is actually one of the most common grief emotions, and yet it is one people often struggle to label. In [2007 grief researchers Paul K. Maciejewski and Holly Prigerson placed yearning front and center, citing findings that it's actually a more dominant characteristic after a death than those emotions we most typically associate with grief like anger and sadness.](#)

And when you think about it, it makes sense. Yearning, as the Oxford Dictionary defines it is to, "have an intense feeling of longing for something, typically something that one has lost or been separated from". Researchers who look at yearning are even more specific:

"Yearning is an emotional state widely experienced in situations involving loss, focused on a desire for a person, place, or thing that was treasured in the past." O'Connor and Sussman (2014)

The Language of Love and Loss

There are words in other languages that point to this same sentiment and add to it. They add the piece that I suspect is crucial to understanding yearning in grief. It is a longing or yearning for something you know that you can't (or probably can't) get back.

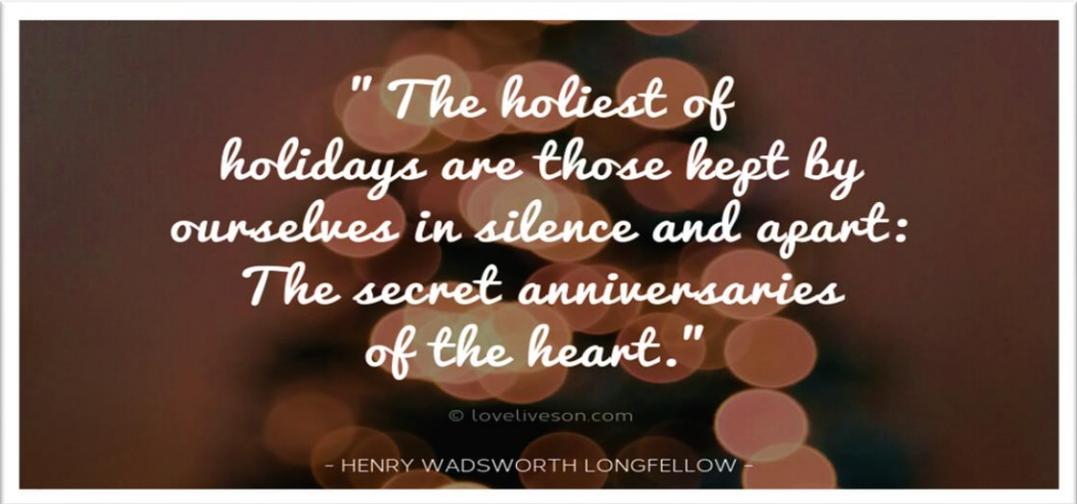
In German, ***sehnsucht***: *A high degree of intense (recurring), and often painful desire for something, particularly if there is no hope to attain the desired, or when its attainment is uncertain, still far away.*

In Portuguese, ***saudade***: *A deep emotional state of melancholic longing for a person or thing that is absent. It often carries a repressed knowledge that the object of longing might never be had again.*

When someone dies, their absence becomes its own presence. We come to love and hate their void. It represents all that is gone, all that we loved, all that miss. We hate the reality it represents – that they are physically missing from the world. But we also love the reality that it represents – that our love for that person is so great that they are still "here", even when they are no longer physically here. We grab ahold of their absence and cling to it as tightly as we can. We still visit and revisit our memories, knowing they hold both the deepest joy and the deepest pain. We marvel that the depth of our love, our loss, and our grief. We want the grief to end and we want it never to end, all at once.

With their absence, we learn something we couldn't know while they were living. We learn just how deeply we were capable of missing them. We learn just how much pain their void in our lives could cause. We learn how willing we are to lean into that pain in order to keep them close. Though we can imagine what it will be like to lose someone we love, when it happens, we learn it was actually unimaginable. And in that gap between what we imagined and what we never could have imagined, lies a type of love we meet for the first time in our grief.

The Portuguese writer Manuel de Melo defined *saudade* as "a pleasure you suffer, an ailment you enjoy". Some may disagree, but I know that there has been a pleasure in the suffering of my own loss. There has been a wonder that my love could be deeper than I ever knew. There is an awe in feeling feelings that I didn't know existed, emotions that can only emerge in the vast void of loss.



*"The holiest of
holidays are those kept by
ourselves in silence and apart:
The secret anniversaries
of the heart."*

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- HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW -

YOU DON'T JUST LOSE SOMEONE ONCE

*You lose them over and over, sometimes many times a day.
When the loss, momentarily forgotten, creeps up, and attacks you from behind.
Fresh waves of grief as the realization hits home, they are gone.
Again.*

*You don't just lose someone once,
you lose them every time you open your eyes to a new dawn,
and as you awaken, so does your memory,
so does the jolting bolt of lightning that rips into your heart, they are gone.
Again.*

*Losing someone is a journey, not a one-off.
There is no end to the loss,
there is only a learned skill on how to stay afloat when it washes over.*

*Be kind to those who are sailing this stormy sea,
they have a journey ahead of them,
and a daily shock to the system each time they realize, they are gone,
Again.*

You don't just lose someone once, you lose them every day, for a lifetime.

~ Donna Ashworth



SAVE THE DATE!

BEREAVED
PARENTS
of the USA



BPUSA ANNUAL CONFERENCE National Gathering 2022

"REFLECTING AND CONNECTING"

July 22nd – 24th

**Le Méridien St. Louis Clayton Hotel
7730 Bonhomme Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105**



I am thankful for the good and the bad.
Because if I changed one little thing,
I might not have met you in this lifetime.
~David Kessler

LISTENING TO AUTUMN

By Macrina Wiederkehr

*Autumn is slipping through summer's branches
and I am listening.*

*I am listening to the dying
flowing forth from autumn's being.*

*I am listening to the life
hidden in the dying.*

I am listening.

I am listening to the trees taking off their lush green garments.

I am listening to the trees turning, turning, ever turning.

I am listening to the burning bush of autumn.

I am listening to the falling of this season.

I am listening.

I am listening to the song of transformation,

to the wisdom of the season,

to the losses and the grieving,

to the turning loose and letting go.

I am listening to the surrender of autumn.

I am listening.

I am listening to the music of the forest's undergrowth,

to the crunch of leaves beneath my feet,

to the miracle of crumbling leaves becoming earth again.

I am listening to the beauty and fragility of aging.

I am listening.

I am listening to the wheel of the year turning,

to the cycle of the seasons,

to the call for harmony and balance.

I am listening to the circle of life.

I am listening.

I am listening to days growing shorter,

to the air turning crisp and cool,

to the slow waning of light,

to the stars that shine in cold, dark nights.

I am listening to the growing harvest moon.

I am listening.

I am listening to happy harvest cries,

to hearts overflowing with thanksgiving,

to tables laden with gifts from the earth,

to baskets overflowing with fruit,

I am listening to the bountiful gift of autumn.

I am listening.

*I am listening to a call for inner growth,
to my need to let go of material possessions,
to my need to reach out for invisible gifts.
I am listening to a call for transformation.
I am listening.
I am listening to the death of old ways.
I am listening to the life force turning inward.
I am listening to the renewal of the earth.
I am listening.
I am listening to summer
handing over to autumn.
I am listening to the poetry of autumn.
I am listening.*



5
WAYS TO
GIVE ON
GIVING
TUESDAY

BEREAVED PARENTS of the USA



1. Give your time or talent: volunteer, give your skills
2. Give your voice: sign a petition, speak up for a cause
3. Give money: donate or fundraise for a nonprofit
4. Give goods: organize a supply drive, donate clothes
5. Give kindness: buy someone lunch, compliment a stranger

Watch for our fundraiser on Facebook

www.facebook.com/BereavedParentsUSA

Nov 30, 2021



COPING WITH GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

By [Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.](#)

You are not alone. Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than being times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss and emptiness. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights and smells trigger memories of the one you love who has died.

No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. We hope, however, the following suggestions will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful, yet painful, time of the year. As you read through this brochure, remember that by being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal in your personal grief experience.

Talk About Your Grief: During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen – without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.

Be Tolerant of Your Physical or Psychological Limits: Feelings of loss will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. And lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

Eliminate Unnecessary Stress: You may already feel stressed so don't overextend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief, but may actually increase stress and postpone the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

Be With Supportive Comforting People: Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings – both happy and sad.

Mention the Name of the Person Who Has Died: Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are unable to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

Do What is Right for You During the Holidays: Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. Talking about these wishes will help you clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. As you become aware of your needs, share them with your friends and family.

Be Gentle on Others, Too: Their emotional reserves may be just as depleted as yours. Be as patient and kind with others as you would want them to be with you. Give yourself a break from people if you feel too stressed to be pleasant around them.

Plan Ahead for Family Gatherings: Decide which family traditions you want to continue and which new ones you would like to begin following the death of someone loved. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just reacting to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear and anxiety during the time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

Embrace Your Treasure of Memories: Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think of times past. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's all right to cry. Memories that were made in love – no one can ever take them away from you.

Renew Your Resources for Living: Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The death of someone loved created opportunities for taking inventory of your life – past, present and future. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

Express Your Faith: During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony.

As You Approach the Holidays, Remember – Grief is Both a Necessity and a Privilege: It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving, caring people.

CRY, CRY AND CRY AGAIN: HOW TEARS HELP THE GRIEF PROCESS

By Priscila deLima

Crying is a unique emotional response that varies from person to person. There are some of us who are emotional basket cases, crying at some point basically every day. Others are the stoic type, dealing with hurt and sadness in every way possible except shedding a tear. In the same way that crying is a perfectly acceptable response when experiencing grief, the absence of it by no means signifies that someone is not truly hurt.

If you are currently experiencing grief, or when you inevitably do go through the experience down the road, it is important to understand the crying is a very beneficial part of the healing process. The purpose of this article is to explain why this is the case. Here are a few good reasons to let yourself shed a tear when and if you need to do so.

CRY, CRY AND CRY.
Emotional tears
release feelings
and stress



Tears Are Emotional Tension Manifested

Any strong emotion, such as grief, almost always causes a significant buildup of tension and frustration in the mind. While you may tell yourself any number of reasons why suppressing these emotions is the right thing to do, in reality, this does far more harm than good. During the grieving process, allowing yourself to have some sort of release from this tension goes a long way in moving one step closer to healing.

The actual manner in which you release these emotions can happen in a number of ways. Maybe punching your mattress, venting to a loved one for hours on end or crying is what works for you. As long as your outlet does harm you or someone else, the way you ease your tension is not important, what IS important is that you do.

For many people, tears serve as a physical manifestation of all the hurt and pain they are feeling inside leaving their internal environment. As each teardrop falls, the pressure they have been experiencing slowly begins to subside.

Crying In Front Of Those Close To You Validates Your Inner Vulnerability

During the grieving process, we tend to feel extremely vulnerable. This can be a scary experience for a lot of people, as vulnerability is far from an easy emotion to express. However, letting yourself cry in front of those closest to you can be extremely beneficial. By doing so, you are allowing yourself to feel safe and like you are not alone.

When we are experiencing this type of sadness and pain, what we really want is to feel like our emotions are validated, especially by someone else. This is why allowing yourself to cry in front of someone who loves and cares about you can be so beneficial. By doing this, you are creating an atmosphere of safety and understanding in the presence of someone who can and will validate how you are feeling in a nonjudgmental way.

Believe It Or Not, Science Supports Crying Due To Grief

While it may seem odd, there is actually research that reports that our tears have a different composition during times of grief that helps with the healing process. In his book, *Crying: The Mystery Of Tears*, Dr. William Frey explains how that normal reflex tears, such as when you laugh a lot or get something caught in your eye, are almost entirely made up of water. Emotional tears, however, actually contain the stress hormones and toxins that buildup up during emotions such as grief.

Furthermore, this response also triggers the body to release endorphins, often referred to as “feel good” hormones. Literally, when you allow yourself to cry during the grieving process, you are not only releasing all of the unwanted hormones that have accumulated, you are also ramping up the biological agents responsible for improving your mood!

