

Bereavement Café Newsletter

A safe space to talk and listen

Written and compiled by
Edna Thomas

JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF: UNDERSTANDING THE EFFECTS OF DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

- Disenfranchised grief is the burden you carry alone because nobody seems to understand what you're going through, and even those who see your struggles might not think it's that big of a deal.



"Sometimes the loss we've experienced is considered by others to be less significant than the death of a family member, and as a result, we may feel shunted aside or marginalised in our own grieving process. It may feel as if we don't have permission to grieve - which can make it even more difficult to come to terms with our loss".

- The writer, Ken Doka, author of *Disenfranchised Grief* puts it like this, when you feel the ache of grief, it can seem like you're alone in your pain. The support of friends and family can help get through each day and live with your loss, but what if your feelings are ignored or even stigmatised? This experience is called disenfranchised grief



Disenfranchised Grief

- This is also known as "hidden" grief or sorrow.
- "The lack of support you get during your grieving process can prolong emotional pain"

Difference between normal grief and disenfranchised grief

Normal grief

The writer, Alan Wolfelt said this about 'normal grief': it is your natural human response to the loss of someone or something you love. The emotions of grief vary greatly - sadness, anger, guilt, relief, shock - but they are all normal responses to loss. As much as you may prefer not to feel or deal with these types of emotions, they are actually a healthy part of the grieving process.



He went on to say that, grief is usually accompanied by cultural rituals that bring people together to grieve. We hold hands, offer words of support and love, send cards and flowers, make donations, and deliver hot meals to the grieving family. We stand together to support those who are grieving and give them emotional and physical support as they mourn. But what if your grief was unacknowledged, no one stopped to listen to you, and there were no sympathetic words?

Disenfranchised grief

Disenfranchised grief is when:

- Your grief is not openly acknowledged.
- The relationship is not recognised
- The ways of grieving are socially unacceptable
- Grief that is not socially sanctioned.

- It is not publicly mourned [(Thompson, N & Doka, K. (2017)).



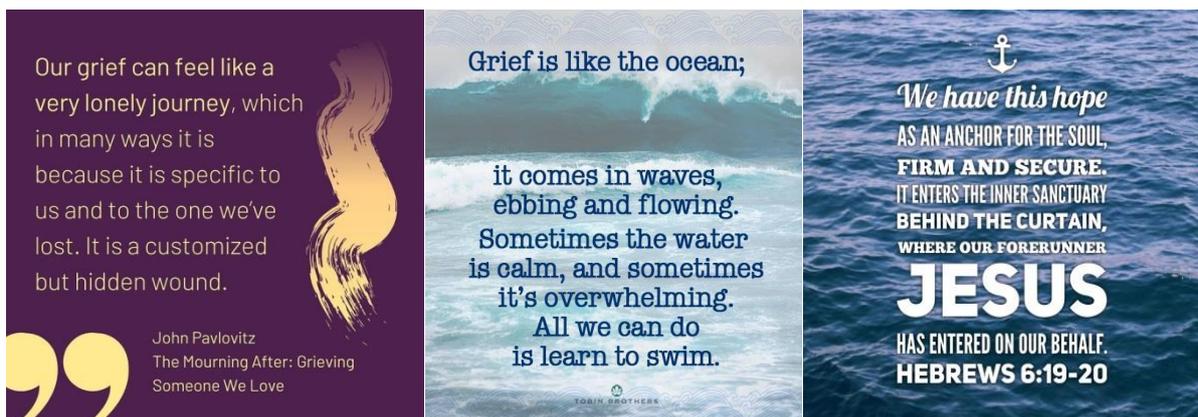
Bereavement, Grief and Mourning

Bereavement

- This is the period of time immediately following a loss, during which you experience grief and express mourning

Grief

- Grief is not one emotion. It is the container that holds all of the emotions felt as a result of loss.
- Grief is an invisible wound. You look in the mirror and see the same person but at the same time you almost don't recognise yourself because you feel so different inside.



Mourning

- Mourning is showing and doing. When you cry, you are mourning. When you talk to someone else about the death, you are mourning. When you write in a journal, put together a photo display, or write a thank-you note for a casserole you received, you are mourning [Dr. Alan Wolfelt].

Disenfranchised grief- social interactions

Others' reactions to your loss and grief can make you feel like you don't have a right to grieve or your grieving isn't valid. You might hear:

- "Shouldn't you be over it by now?"
- "You have to stay strong and keep moving forward."
- "If you don't cry, that means the loss doesn't affect you."

What does disenfranchised grief look and feel like?

- According to one writer, disenfranchised grief often looks like sadness, but it may also show up as anger, frustration, exhaustion, or lack of focus.



Depending on what phase of grief a person is in, their emotions may appear more or less obvious. This is all true for disenfranchised grief, but it may include a few other experiences as well, such as the following:

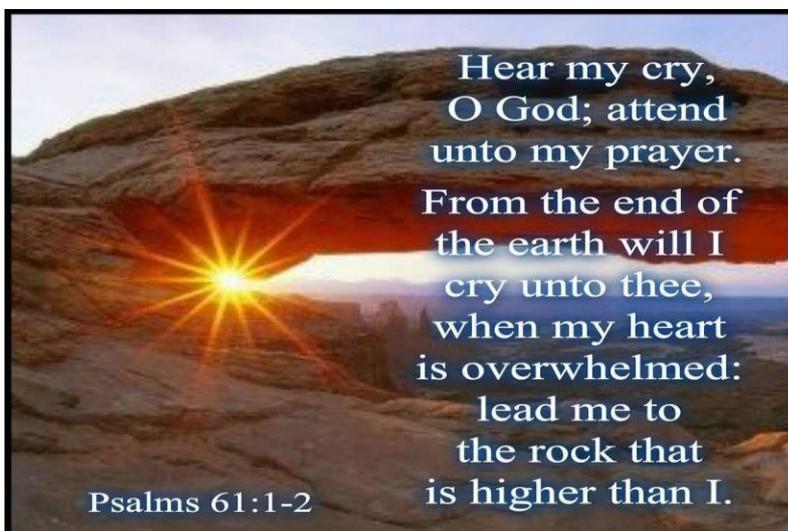
- Trouble connecting with others because of shame, isolation, embarrassment, or anxiety over the hidden nature of the loss.
- A lack of closure, like their loss is open-ended or less defined.

- Feeling stigmatised or guilty, wanting to avoid the scrutiny that may come from talking about it.

Bible verses for a grieving heart



- By giving all of our sorrow up to God, He will replace the bad feelings with joy, peace, and hope over time”.



- The Lord will carry you if you ask Him. When you are feeling so weak you cannot take another step, ask Him to lift you high into His loving arms. Then rest in Him with an open and listening heart. This does not mean your problems will disappear, but it does mean you will have 'Someone' to share them with”.



- Dr. Joseph Stowell says, "Even though your heart is breaking and tears are clouding your eyes and staining your cheeks, God does give us something worth trusting in tough times. And that's Him; and Him alone."

Prayer for a grieving heart

Dear heavenly Father, thank you that you are the source of all true and joy in life. Your Word says that, even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you Lord are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me [Psalm 23:4]. The loss of my loved one feels like a dark valley. I ask that you lead me through this difficult time. May I find the comfort I desire in you and the strength I need in your Name. May your presence be with me every hour of the day and night? Abba Father, I thank you that whenever I am feeling sad and alone, I can always come to you for comfort and reassurance in Jesus Name. Amen.

What causes disenfranchised grief?

Disenfranchised grief can occur when other people don't recognise or validate your grief or if you think they may not feel comfortable sharing your grief. A feeling of "no one understands" can overwhelm you.

Some causes include:

- Miscarriage
- Infertility
- Grieving the loss of a loved one to addiction
- Grieving a family member's divorce
- Someone who is still living (Alzheimer's or dementia)

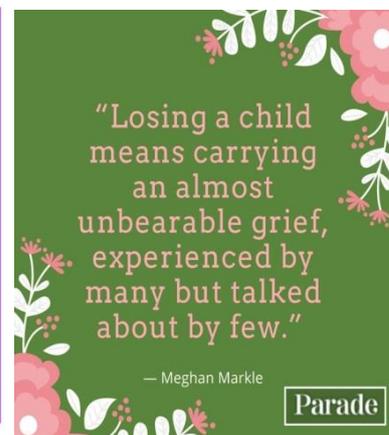
Visit our webpage: wntcg.org/bereavement

The Bereavement Café ministry is part of The Willesden New Testament Church of God



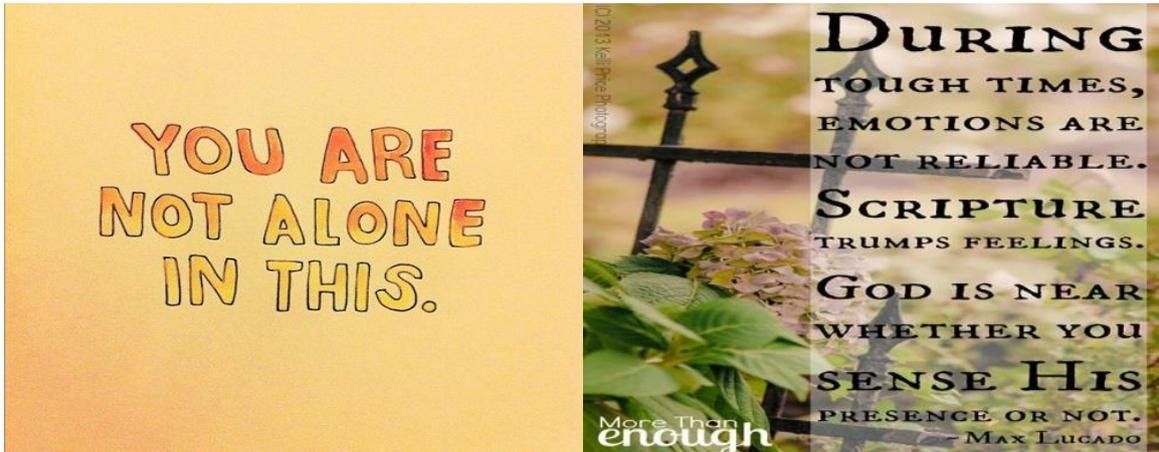
Miscarriage

- Grief from a miscarriage, the loss of a child, is so difficult. Sometimes, people didn't even know you were expecting, and therefore don't know that you are dealing with grief at all. Others know, but think that because the child wasn't yet born, or hadn't reached a certain trimester, that the loss itself isn't that great.
- According to the writer, Jo Tocher, miscarriage is a silent pain; one that is often swept under the carpet and not spoken of, it is mentioned briefly then the silence steps in [Life after Miscarriage].



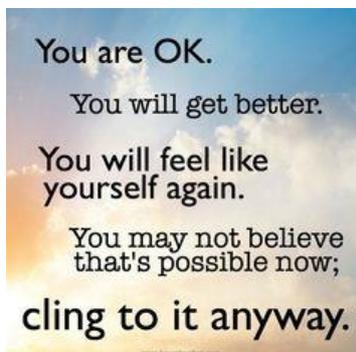
Infertility

- The stigmatisation surrounding infertility contributes to an atmosphere of silence and invisibility.
- Many women who experience infertility feel a sense of failure or self-blame toward their bodies, and some may withdraw socially, isolate, or struggle with their identity and sense of self.



- The stigma surrounding infertility can make it difficult for women to reach out for support. As a result, they find themselves navigating the experience alone.

When a woman does talk openly about her infertility, other people may not respond in ways that are validating or compassionate, which may make the situation worse than if she hadn't disclosed at all [Counselling Today].



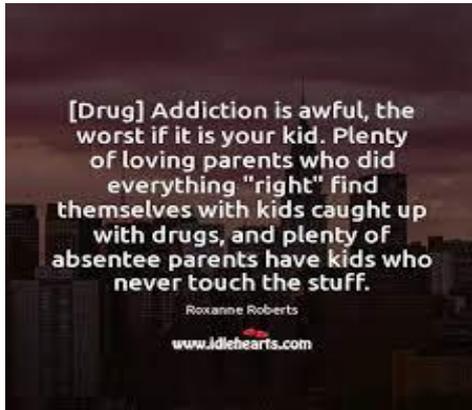
“The stigma attached to infertility really needs to end, especially in the Indian community. It's not a choice, just like any other medical condition isn't a choice”



Grieving the loss of a loved one to addiction

- When addiction leads to death, society becomes very opinionated - *"It's his own fault. He should have made better choices. He could have stopped, but he didn't. His parents weren't paying attention. Look what he/she did to his family"*
- Disenfranchised grievers tend to hide their grief in order to avoid shaming or dismissing comments from others.

When you lose a loved one to the disease of addiction, it is crucial to find someone empathic to your situation.

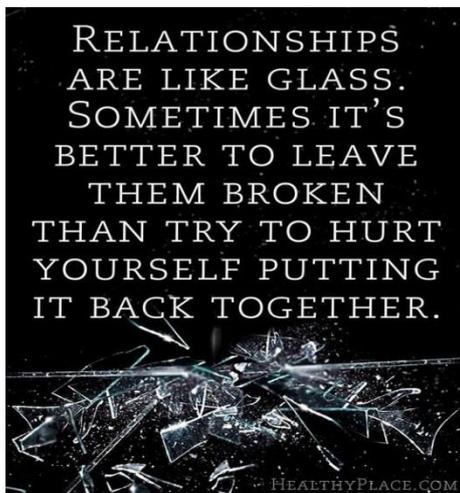


“
I think the biggest barrier to treatment is **stigma**. Even families that have someone struggling with addiction want to keep it within the walls of their home, and hope that it somehow passes or cures itself.

DR. STEPHEN LOYD

Grieving a family member's divorce

- The loss of a relationship can impact more than just the two people in it. When someone goes through a divorce, the ex-spouse separates from everyone in the family as well. Extended family members can feel a sense of loss when the ex-spouse is no longer at gatherings.

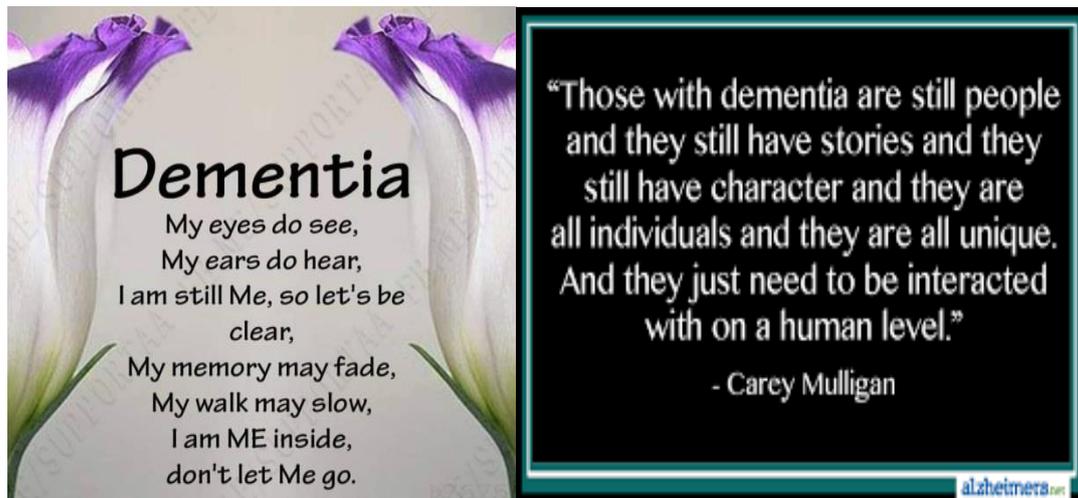


This is a thing many people outside your grief cannot understand: that you have not simply lost one person, at one point in time. You have lost their presence in every aspect of your life. Your future has changed as well as your "now."

Megan Devine
www.refugeingrief.com @refugeingrief www.facebook.com/refugeingrief

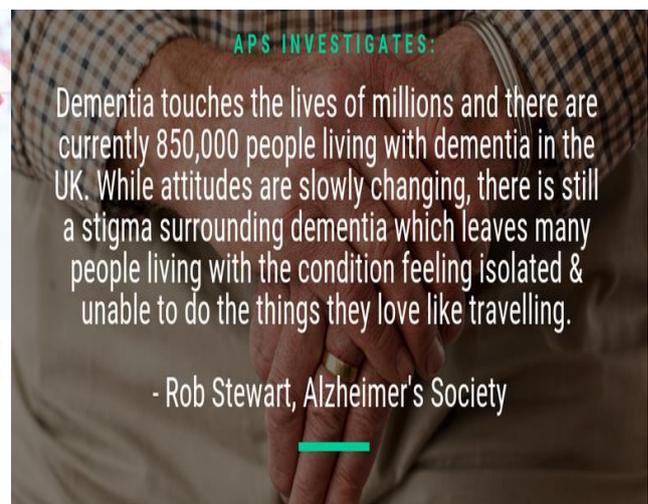
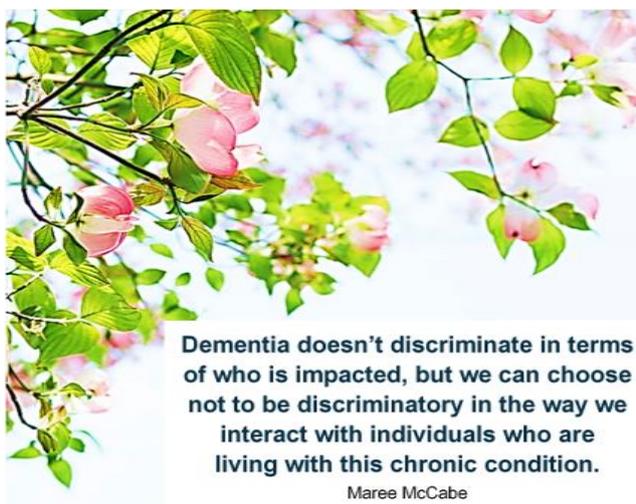
Grieving someone who is still living (Alzheimer's or dementia)

According to Dementia UK, when a person is labelled as having dementia, they're at increased risk of experiencing stigma, stereotyping and discrimination.



This may happen because:

- They are defined by their diagnosis and no longer seen as an individual.
- People make assumptions about what they are like based on their diagnosis.
- People lack understanding of what a dementia diagnosis means and how it might affect the person
- People assume that dementia makes the person less capable or intelligent.



There are many ways that stigma can negatively impact the lives of people living with dementia, their families and their caregivers.

- Lack of awareness about dementia.
- Harmful and misleading assumptions.
- Negative language.

- Belittlement and jokes.

Other types of disenfranchised losses include:

- The loss of someone due to suicide
- Loss of freedom, safety, independence
- Death of a pet
- Abortion



- "Overall, disenfranchised grief means that what you're feeling isn't accepted by someone you deem important. This could be society as a whole, family, friends, or even yourself. After all, you can convince yourself that you have no right to grieve this loss. Unfortunately, that attitude won't stop the feelings or help you work through them. You may feel judged or criticised by others for your grief, so, what can you do?"

Please Note!!

- Disenfranchised grief is poorly understood and this lack of understanding only complicates the healing process. If you find yourself in this situation, remember that you can find relief when grieving by acknowledging your feelings and the right to experience them and work through resolution in your own time.
- Don't run away from the emotions you're going through, and don't try to bury them just because others don't show compassion or don't seem to validate them.
- The Bereavement Café Support Group is here to support you by offering a safe place for you to talk through and process your feelings. [Please see information below and at the end of this Newsletter].

“Grief is a silent partner sometimes it seals the heart shut the only way to heal a sealed heart is to break the seal and shout it out.”

Grief Counselor- Tess Calomino

Call the Marie Curie Support Line
0800 090 2309

We are open every day over Christmas and New Year, from Sun to Sun, Thursday 24 December to Monday 4 January

Marie Curie
Can not support through terminal illness

Is it normal to feel like this?
What support is available?
Why won't she talk about it?
How can I boost my energy?
Will I need to manage the medications?
How will we manage for money?
Who can we ask about this?
Need to talk to someone
Need to get things in order

CRUSE NATIONAL HELPLINE

0808 808 1677

Cruse Bereavement Care

MONDAY	09:30 - 17:00
TUESDAY	09:30 - 20:00
WEDNESDAY	09:30 - 20:00
THURSDAY	09:30 - 20:00
FRIDAY	09:30 - 17:00

Symptoms of Disenfranchised Grief

Grief can cause anger, sadness, guilt, and a sense of numbness. Some of the more obvious signs you may be going through a *disenfranchised* grieving process can include that, in addition to all those “normal” grief symptoms, you also might:

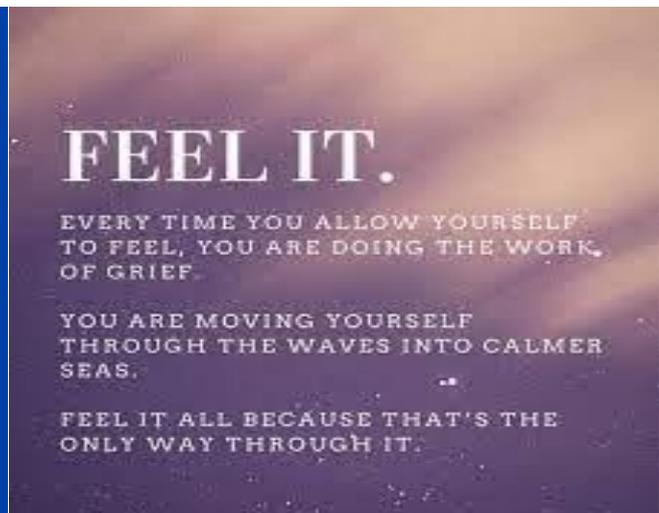
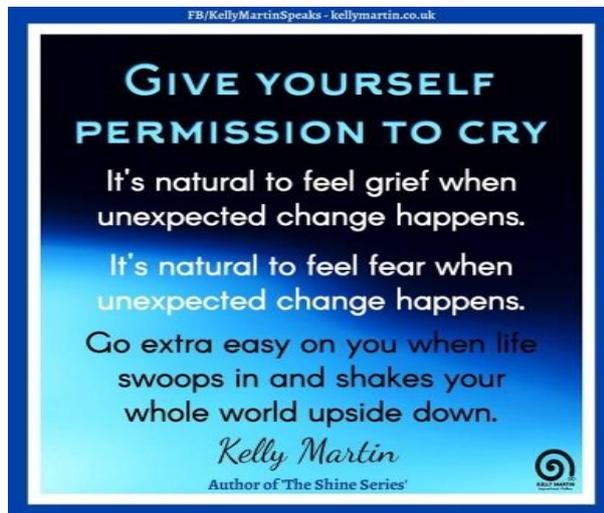
- Have extreme feelings of loneliness and longing
- Feel like you can't talk to anyone
- Experience shame over how you're feeling
- Feel anxious or have intense anxiety
- Are depressed
- Feeling that life isn't worth living after the loss.



According to the writer of *Choosing Therapy*, Every person grieves in their own unique way and in their own time-frame. Many people experience grief on multiple levels, including emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Grief may come and go, and may bring up conflicting feelings.

How to Cope with Disenfranchised Grief

- Acknowledge your loss and validate your feeling
- Find a way to process and understand your feelings, such as talking to a friend or journaling.
- Take care of yourself physically and emotionally.
- Give yourself permission to feel all of your feelings



Other ways to cope

- Engage in self-care
- Create a ritual
- Know when to ask for help
- **Remind yourself that you are worthy of time and space to grieve.**
- **Remind yourself that you are not alone.**



The Six Needs of Mourning: Alan Wolfelt

- Need 1: Accept the reality of the loss
- Need 2: Let yourself feel the pain of loss
- Need 3: Remember the person who died
- Need 4: develop a new self- identity.
- Need 5: Search for meaning
- Need 6: Receive ongoing support from others

"Ultimately, meaning comes through finding a way to sustain your love for the person after their death while you're moving forward with your life. Although your relationship with your loved one will change after death, it will also continue, no matter what. The challenge will be to make it a meaningful one."

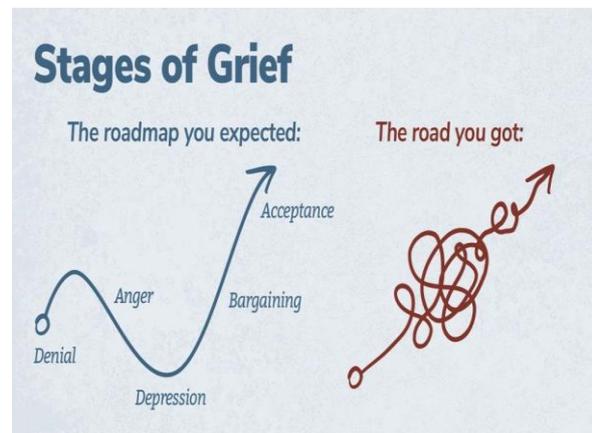
David Kessler



The grieving process

- Grief is not a one-size-fits-all process. It is an individual path, and it is one that has no rhyme or reason.
- There is no valid or correct way to grieve. However, understanding these stages of grief enables you to understand your grieving journey.
- Allow yourself to mourn in whatever way that you experience your feelings of grief and loss.

The stages of grief



- The five stages of grief are part of the framework that makes up our learning to live with the one we lost. They are tools to help frame and identify what we might be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through them or goes in a prescribed order (Elizabeth Kubler-Ross).

Overall, disenfranchised grief means that what you're feeling isn't accepted by someone you deem important. This could be society as a whole, family, friends, or even yourself. After all, you can convince yourself that you have no right to grieve this loss. Unfortunately, that attitude won't stop the feelings or help you work through them. You may feel judged or criticised by others for your grief, so, what can you do?



At the end of the day, it doesn't matter if someone is coping with any type of loss better or worse than others expect—they are still grieving. Disenfranchised grief prolongs and complicates bereavement, which is incredibly difficult even for those who experience healthy, validated grief.

In your journey of disenfranchised grief, try to remember that:



Overcoming disenfranchised grief may take longer to overcome, and likely will include extra steps in the grief journey, but it is possible. Greater understanding of this grief complication can help people support one another to overcome grief sooner.

Practice Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is giving yourself the kindness and care you would give to another



Your Basic needs



To know...

There are people who can help

You are not the only one

The pain of grief becomes more manageable with time

You can stay connected to your loved one and carry them into the future

A wide range of thoughts, emotions, and experiences are considered "normal" in grief

Your loss matters and so does your grief

WHAT ARE OUR MOST BASIC GRIEF NEEDS?

whatsyourgrief.com

- ✚ The Bereavement Café would like to welcome you to our Bereavement Support Group which takes place on the last Saturday of each month but for the month of November it will take place on
- ✚ Saturday 19 November 10am-12.30pm in The Lewinson Centre.
Please see information below. If you would like more information, visit our website: www.wntcg.org/bereavement





Bereavement Café

- * A safe space to talk, listen and be supported in your grief
- * Explore thoughts and emotions
- * Confront the fears and think about next steps
- * Grief support for the young and old

**SATURDAY
19 NOVEMBER 2022
10AM-12.30PM**

THE LEWINSON CENTRE
165-167 High Road, Willesden NW10 2SG
Coffee & Tea available

For more info please see
Edna Thomas, Sharon Grant, Moses

Why not join us and meet/share with others who are going through their own journey of grief?



Visit our webpage: wntcg.org/bereavement

Bereavement Support - Resources

Free, local support for you **Bereavement HELPLINE**

By calling our Bereavement Support Helpline, you can:

- ✚ Benefit from a listening ear and emotional support
- ✚ Find information & guidance on what to do after someone has died
- ✚ Discover free, local support in your community, tailored to you

✚ Call our Helpline now on **01279 967670**



If you are not able to talk about your feelings with a family member or friend, you can contact:

- ✚ Your Pastor or a member of the pastoral team
- ✚ Your GP
- ✚ www.wntcg.org/bereavement
- ✚ www.wntcg.org/care

OR

Other Bereavement Organisations

- ✚ Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS) - provides information and support for anybody affected by the death of a baby.
- ✚ Sudden - helps people who have experienced a sudden bereavement to access specialist information and advice (Sudden Bereavement Help [0800 2600 400](tel:08002600400)).
- ✚ Samaritans Helpline: [08457 909090](tel:08457909090), 24 hours a day
- ✚ Cruse Bereavement Care: 0808 808 1677
- ✚ Grief Encounter: Provides support to children and families who have been bereaved via phone, online chat and email.

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- ✚ You can also take part in group activities with likeminded families at their Sundays, Grief Groups and Remembrance Days.

Visit our webpage: wntcg.org/bereavement

The Bereavement Café ministry is part of The Willesden New Testament Church of God

Phone open Monday-Friday 9am-9pm:
0808 802 0111

- Online chat - Email: griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk
- Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) - Telephone 024 7644 969

Books on Grief

- Norman Wright - Experiencing Grief
- Mary Williams and Steve Fraser - Someone has died suddenly
- Kathleen O'Hara - **A Grief Like No Other: Surviving the Violent Death of Someone you Love**
- Pam Vredevelt - Empty Arms: Hope and Support for Those Who Have Suffered a Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Tubal Pregnancy
- William Worden - Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy
- Tom Zuba - Permission of Grieve : A New Way To Do Grief
- Malcolm Duncan: Good Grief -Living with Sorrow and Loss

Be blessed- Stay safe - Blessings - The Bereavement Café

How others can help!



Bereavement How other people can help

Do remember that appearances can be deceptive
I may look as if I'm coping okay, but inside I may be falling apart.

Do invite me out to coffee or lunch
Just to change the scene for a while.

Do be ready to listen
To all the jumble of emotions I may be feeling without being judgemental.

Do encourage me
To be kind to myself and not to push myself to meet other people's expectations of how I should be.

Do be aware that there will be times when I don't feel able to talk
But this doesn't mean I won't want to talk at another time.

Don't be unprepared for the truth
Don't ask me how I am if you only want to hear "I'm okay thank you."

Don't tell me that you've been too busy to phone or get in touch
Better to say "I didn't know what to say."

Don't try and give me answers
It is unlikely that you will have any that will satisfy me – just allow me to express all my fears, questions and doubts.

Don't measure the way I react
Or the emotions I express by your own expectations or experience. My grief is unique to me.

Don't feel you have to do something
Just be there.

For more information on bereavement support please visit:
www.careforthefamily.org.uk/family-life/bereavement-support

