

# Acceptance

July – Sept '21

Vol. XVI

## NEWSLETTER

### **A Year With No “Firsts”**

*By Sara Middleton, LPC Bereavement  
Coordinator and Whatsyourgrief.com*

We can finally get out and see people and meet people and have gatherings. There is a sense of freedom and release from a year of not meeting because of the pandemic. You might find yourself out of nowhere hit by a tsunami of grief and emotions that you were not expecting when you return to gathering and meeting with friends and loved ones. This is called **delayed grief**. This delayed grief is an unfortunate consequence from the pandemic.

**What is delayed grief?** Delayed grief is just that: grief that you don't fully experience until quite a while after your loss.

**What causes delayed grief?** There are a lot of different reasons why someone might experience delayed grief, even years after a death. Below are examples of life circumstances which can cause delay grief:

- Worldwide pandemic with social restrictions
- Physical injury/illness
- Divorce
- Pregnancy
- Major work event
- Being the strong one in the family and caring for others in the family
- Anything major distraction following the death of a loved one.

The first year after our loved one dies we experience many first without them. Examples are: the first thanksgiving, holiday season, birthdays, mother's day, father's day, anniversaries, reunions, religious holidays etc. This past year the world paused and bereaved individuals missed out on many "firsts"

**What do I do now that I'm starting to experience the heavy emotions that have been delayed for months or years?**

**Talk to your friends and family.**

Delayed grief can be isolating, as it can feel as though everyone else you know has already moved on. But that doesn't mean that it's too

late to talk it through. Reach out to those close to you to let them know you need their support.

**Take time to reflect on your new reality.**

If you can, try to take some time away from work and family responsibilities to look after yourself and take stock. This might mean taking some time off and arranging childcare, or just carving out the odd hour or so during the day to meditate or take a long bath.

**Remember and honor your loved one.**

If you were unable to have a celebration of life, now would be a good time to gather together to remember your loved one. Or, at your next gathering, be intentional about including the memory and presence of your special loved one.

**Look after your health.**

When we're grieving, self-care often flies out the window. Try to eat three healthy meals a day – even if you don't really feel like it – and get plenty of sleep.

**Avoid unhealthy coping strategies.**

Drinking alcohol or drugs or food might numb the pain for a while, but you'll feel a lot worse in the long run.

**Look for local bereavement support.**

You can ask your doctor or local hospice if they can recommend a support group or individual bereavement counselor.

---

*I must force myself to look upon the familiar things, the coat hanging on the chair, the hat in the hall...To ease the pain I took over some of his things for myself. I wore his shirts, sat at his writing desk, used his pens to acknowledge the hundreds of letters of condolence; and by the very process of identification with the objects he had touched, felt the closer to him.*

*-Daphne Du Maurier*

---

## *The Mourner's Bill of Rights*

By Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D., CT

**You have the right to experience your own unique grief.** No one else will grieve in the exact same way you do. So, when you turn to others for help, don't allow them to tell you what you should or should not be feeling.

**You have the right to talk about your grief.** Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want about your grief. If at times you do not feel like talking, you also have the right to be silent.

**You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions.** Confusion, disorientation, fear, guilt, and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. Others may try to tell you that feeling angry, for example, is wrong. Don't take these judgmental responses to heart. Instead, find listeners who will accept your feelings without conditions.

**You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits.** Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you feeling fatigued. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. And don't allow others to push you into doing things you don't feel ready to do.

**You have the right to experience "griefbursts".** Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overcome you. This can be frightening, but it is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.

**You have the right to make use of ritual.** The funeral ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. More importantly, the funeral is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you the funeral or other healing rituals such as these are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.

**You have the right to embrace your spirituality.** If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who

won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.

**You have the right to search for meaning.** You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some of your questions may have answers, but some may not. And watch out for the clichéd responses some people may give you. Comments like, "It was God's will" or "Think of what you have to be thankful for" are not helpful and you do not have to accept them.

**You have the right to treasure your memories.** Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

**You have the right to move toward your grief and heal.** Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember, grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself and avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you must forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

### **Meet our new Bereavement Coordinator**

Sara Middleton, MA, LPC



Sara has been working in grief and loss for 10+ years. She's from Ohio and she loves spending time with her family and friends.

Welcome, Sara!