



Psychotherapy and Life Coaching

for Children, Teens, and Women

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Good Grief!?

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It is difficult to imagine where the phrase, “Good grief,” originated.

There doesn’t seem to be anything good about it. When it comes from Charlie Brown, it sounds more like sarcasm. Is there bad grief? Excellent grief?

Grief is a normal, human, emotional response to loss. Death is an obvious loss, but, by no means, the only loss. It is normal and human to grieve any loss, including loss of one’s youth, loss of a home (even if moving to a better one), loss of a job (even a bad one), loss of realizing one’s dreams, loss of time, loss of status, and loss of

another chance. Because grief is emotional, it is not necessarily rational. A bride and a groom may cry at their wedding, a couple may cry when they move into their first home, and parents may cry when their child is born. All of these occasions are beautiful new beginnings, which also means endings and grief over the losses. The grief may be minimal compared to the enjoyment, but it is part of growth.

Pain is part of healing. Remember mercurchrome? No child ever wanted a scrape cleaned with it, because it hurt too much. Hurt was healing. Leave dirt and germs in a wound,

(Continued on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

and infection and more pain are sure to follow. Grief works the same way. Deny and ignore the grief, and depression and more pain are sure to follow. Often, the pain will come in a physical form, as grief that is denied stays in the body. Many people will begin having frequent headaches or difficulty sleeping. It is not unusual for an injury to occur after a loss and for chronic pain related to the injury to ensue. Grief does not disappear or simply melt away. It must be felt and released.

Grief is painful and, thus, often avoided. We live in a society in which grief is not only not honored, but often not acknowledged. Employers may give 3 days off from work for bereavement. Depending on the significance of the loss, 3 days may not even cover the period of shock and disbelief surrounding the loss. While support and assistance are often offered in the immediate aftermath of the death of a loved one, many people often presume little or none is needed within a few weeks or months later. Those who are grieving may berate themselves for continuing

to cry and feel anger many months after a loss. There are limits on grief—3 days, a few months, 1 year—instead of allowances and permissions. The right amount of time to grieve is however long it takes. Grieving is a process, not an event. The process, like the rebirth on Earth after winter's death, entails growth and development. The process has a larger impact than on just the area of loss, and many past losses may resurface, especially if not fully grieved.

Memorial Day, one day each year when grieving is sanctioned, will be here soon. However, any day can be a day to remember losses, big and small, and allow emotions a means of expression.

Expression can involve crying, talking about losses, writing in a journal, writing a poem, painting a picture, or creating a memorial. While these emotions can be painful, the spirit is cleansed, allowing for new memories to form and growth to take place.

Perhaps grief is good.

