

Grove Park Hospice NEWSLETTER

SUMMER
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1353 Grove Park NE, PO Box 701, Orangeburg, SC 29116

(803) 536-6644



Conflicted Feelings In Grief: Reconciling The Present With What Might Have Been

If I had to choose one word to describe life after loss, I might choose “conflicted.” It’s probably not the first word that comes to most people’s minds when thinking about loss. But, for me, one of grief’s most profound lessons is that our feelings, thoughts, perspectives, and wants are often at odds.

Considering how complex we human beings are, this shouldn’t be a revelation. But ultimately, our complexity is what drives us to try and simplify things by choosing one emotion, one motivation, one explanation, or one truth. These reductions make the world easier to navigate in many situations, but they can quickly complicate things in life after loss. (Continued on p. 2)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- **Conflicted Feelings In Grief: Reconciling The Present With What Might Have Been**
- **Grove Park Hospice Seeks Compassionate Volunteers**



Conflicted Feelings in Grief (Cont. from p. 1)

Some examples of ways people experience conflicted feelings in grief include:

Wanting to move forward, but also wanting to hold onto the past

Wanting to feel better, but also feeling guilty about feeling better

Feeling hopeful, but also feeling hopeless

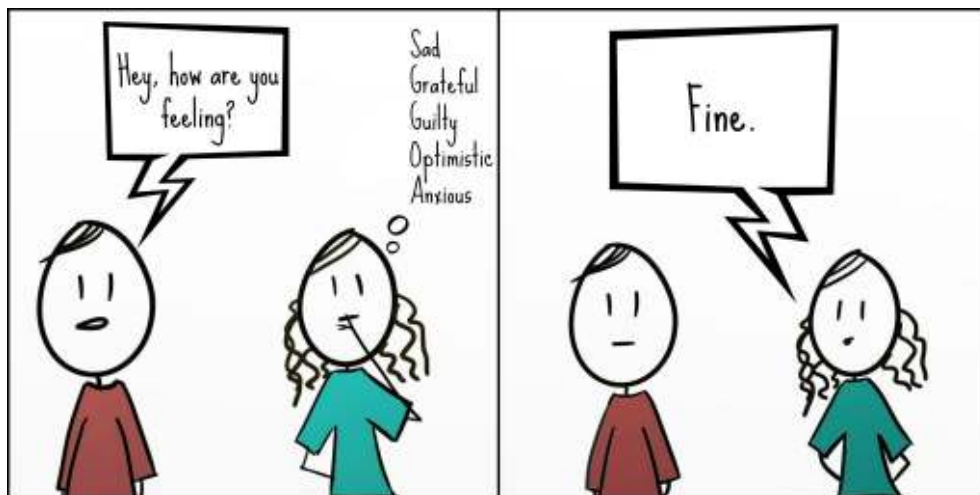
Feeling immense grief, but also feeling relief

Loving your late partner, but also loving someone new

The misconception that you have to choose one truth can leave you feeling mixed up. However, we have an easy suggestion to help resolve the discord in the statements above— simply change the word “but” to “and.” Sometimes your thoughts and emotions seem contradictory when, in reality, they can all exist all at once. It may feel complicated and uncomfortable to allow two seemingly conflicting truths to live within you. However, over time, the reality that you don’t have to eradicate specific thoughts and emotions to make room for new ones may make grieving a little easier.

All that said, you will probably still be aware of dissonance in your thoughts and feelings. It’s a little like being at a party with people who you know don’t get along. At times you may worry that chaos is about

to ensue. Will one side suddenly declare they can no longer be in the same room as the other? Will you ultimately have to choose between them? Even years after learning emotions and thoughts don’t cancel each other out, you may still struggle to let them exist at the same time.



Learning to Feel Good While Also Feeling Bad

I think something most grieving people can relate to is the tiny (or maybe

even massive) sense of guilt they experienced the first time they found themselves laughing, smiling, having fun, or feeling okay after their loss. When an anxious or judgmental internal voice interrupted a rare moment of okayness, saying, “Wow, I thought you were grieving, but it looks like you’re doing just fine. Guess you don’t care as much as I thought you did.”

This voice’s response comes from the myth that when a person is grieving, they must only ever feel miserable, and any expressions to the contrary signal they are “doing better.” On a larger scale, people may feel guilty as they move forward in life and discover new purposes, make new connections, or find a sense of peace or happiness. Feeling okay in their life without their loved one feels like a betrayal. The reality is that grief is so ongoing that it is impossible to wait for it to end before allowing yourself to experience anything positive. You will likely grieve in different ways forever, so you have to find a way to let it live alongside new purpose, meaning, and connections.

Conflicted Feelings and Conflicting Timelines: Appreciating the Present While Grieving the Life You Might Have Had

We’re conflicted, caught between two lives, but this is par for the course when grieving. When you grieve someone you love, you also grieve the life you had with them in... (Cont. on p. 3)

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(Cont. from p. 2) ...the past and the life you were supposed to have together in the future. That “future life” is a point you sometimes intersect with as time goes on. For example, thinking “he was supposed to walk me down the aisle” or “we would be celebrating his 60th birthday.” And each time you bump into one of these reminders, you may feel grief. You also run into these thoughts when events in your current life seem directly tied to your loss. We’ve shared our example of this—our book, and there are countless other ways this plays out. Loss changes you and your life, and many people head in new directions because life necessitates it or because their loss has propelled them to do so.

There’s an inherent conflict in learning to like or appreciate anything that seemingly stems from your loss. You hate its beginning, and there’s a good chance you’d reverse it if you had the chance. Though I would suggest that another way to look at many of these things is that your loved one and their memory lies at the heart of them.

For Those Who Do Not See Much to Appreciate in Their Present

Before I end, I would be remiss if I didn’t acknowledge that I’m writing from the perspective of someone who’s been grieving for a long time. I realize that for many of you reading this, especially those early in grief, the contrast between what “could have..., should have..., might have...” been is still too painful to find any source of purpose, meaning, or contentment.

If this is how you feel, know it’s normal. Though many paths lead to okayness in life, it’s hard to see this when your forced off your path in the middle of a dark and dense forest. You have to find a new route, alone, without your loved one—and this takes time and a lot of hard work. A simple article like this can only be of so much help, but if you take anything from it, let it be that you don’t have to “get over” grief or let go of your loved one to experience moments of peace and purpose in the present. - Eleanor Haley, <http://whatsyourgrief.com>, Jan. 21, 2017



Our Hospice Chaplain, Rev. Alexander Baker, is available to discuss with you and your family the process of spirituality in healing from grief and loss. If you need assistance or to schedule a meeting, please call (803) 536-6644.

Grove Park Hospice Seeks Compassionate Volunteers

We are in need of volunteers to provide emotional support and companionship to our hospice families. Our hospice volunteers typically spend a few hours each month visiting patients in their home. They might chat, read, or simply be a listening ear for our patients. Their presence and kindness makes a huge impact in the lives of the families we serve. If you would like more information on how to become a volunteer, please call (803) 536-6644.





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1324 Grove Park NE
Orangeburg, SC 29115
(803) 536-6644

The Grove Park Family remains faithfully dedicated to
RESTORING DIGNITY, OFFERING HOPE AND PROVIDING COMFORT

**We need Volunteers! Please call
(803) 536-6644 for more information.**

Additional Resources:

<http://www.aarp.org/family/lifeafterloss/>
<http://www.hospicenet.org/html/bereavement.html>
<http://www.hospicefoundation.org>
<http://www.griefnet.org>
<http://goodgrief.org/grief>
<http://www.hospicehelp.org/events.htm>
<http://www.griefrecoverymethod.com/about-us>
http://www.tributes.com/grief_recovery_center/index

