

Moving Through Grief

Robin Shapiro, LICSW

Belfast

Grief is

- Reaction to Lost Attachment
- Awful
- Often Avoided
- Feelable
- Healable

We Grieve Because We're Attached to

- People
- Animals
- A Plan for the Future
- Places
- Ideas
- Seasons

Grief Manifests as

- Sadness
- Anger
- Hopelessness
- Guilt or Shame
- Depression
- Avoidance of all of the above

Stages of Grief

- Shock and Disbelief (especially if a surprise)

 - Anger and Blaming (God, self, the one who is gone, doctors, etc.)
 - Sadness, Depression, Hopelessness, Yearning
- (If you feel any of the above, congratulations, you're doing it right.)
- Integration
 - Over the acute grief, but still missing it, her, him, etc.

Robin's Rules of Grief

1. It always lasts longer than you (and others) think it ought.
2. It makes you tired, cranky, stupid or feeling hopeless.
3. Avoid it and it stays terrible, creates depression, and/or useless busyness.
4. Feel it all and it gets better.
5. It always hurts more than you think it should.

Trauma Complicates Grief

- Surprise deaths
- Accidents
- Suicide of someone you know
- Deaths involving a lot of suffering
- Ongoing effects of a loss. (Trump)

Work with the Trauma

- Acknowledge and name it.
- Name the feelings
- Get help for it.
 - Therapy: EMDR, Somatic Work
 - Talk about

Hang Out With Grief

- Feel it
- Write about it
- Talk about it
- Name it
- You're not weak for feeling it. You're **STRONG**.

More Grief Process

- Do get exercise, hang out with people, talk about it, have some normal life
- Don't drink, get high, get stuck on a video game for weeks, pretend you're alright when you're not.

How NOT to Support Grievers

- Tell them not to grieve, it's really okay.
- Point out the good things about the loss.
- Tell them it was God's will.
- Avoid them
- Never bring up the loss

How TO Support Grievers

- Ask them how they're doing with the grief: "What's coming up now?"
- Hang out with them
- Don't get them drunk or high.
- Ask them again later.
- Ask them what you can do.
 - For them/To acknowledge the loss
- Go for a walk and get them breathing

How to Speak Grief

- Ambiguity: Guilt over ambivalence at the death of a family member.
- Monday: A seemingly innocent day, but you still feel the loss.
- Mourn Mirage: Appearance of a stranger who looks like the one who died.
- Dark humor: What makes you laugh now may be appalling to others. Ignore.
- Yuck yuks: the combination of shock, relief, and guilt arising from the 1st time you find yourself laughing after a deep loss.
- Reverse comfort: Something you need from others, but others silently expect *you* to provide *them* while discussing your loss. (NOT YOUR JOB!)
- (Sofer & Birkner, Modern Loss)