



S.O.S.
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BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT
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Grief Isn't Something to Get Over

- Mary Lamia

The notion that one gets over it is a myth.



The emotion of grief may be triggered by the loss of a loved one or the result of a life circumstance. Many people believe that if you have effectively mourned a loss you will then achieve closure. The notion that one mourns a loss and then gets over it, to the extent that emotions about the loss are not triggered in the future, is a myth.

Similarly, children have such expectations about getting over loss. They seem to believe that one needs to do something in particular in order to achieve that goal. Several years ago, as host of a radio talk show for kids, I asked listeners about the issue of loss. An 8-year old boy told me that his grandfather had died two weeks before and he wanted to know how to get over it—he thinks about him all the time and can't concentrate on anything else. A 12-year old boy explained that his dog had died and he wanted to know what to do since he couldn't say good-bye to her and didn't think that he could ever "fill [his] heart with

anything else." I didn't ask what he meant by his choice of words, however, I felt its meaning. A 13-year old girl said that she asks her brother about what clothes look good on her because she doesn't have a mom, and it always feels like something is missing. She asked, "How do I get over my mom dying?"

The misguided notion that grief is a process that allows a final working through of a loss is likely the fault of my own profession—mental health professionals who have promoted this notion in their work with grieving individuals. Clinical data makes it clear that any significant loss, later and repeatedly, brings up longing and sadness. Is it because these people have not achieved closure by traversing prescribed stages of mourning or because they have not "worked through the loss" as some therapists boldly claim? No. It's because you never get over loss. As time passes,

the intensity of feelings about the loss will lessen, you might also find ways to sooth or distract yourself, or you can partially bury grief-related feelings by creating new memories. But you're not going to get over it because that's impossible: you cannot erase emotional memory. Besides, it's not about achieving closure. Instead you have to figure out what you are going to do when your emotional memories are later triggered.

Emotions that have to do with loss are triggered throughout our lives. Usually they are in the form of anniversary reactions, such as the birthday or death day of the lost loved one or any significant holiday in which you might want to be with the person who is gone. Reminders, such as visiting a place you've been with the person you lost, will trigger a similar response. Episodes of depression or anxiety that seem to come from nowhere may have been activated by anniversary reactions or situation-matching reactions.

Grief can also be triggered by an age-matching anniversary reaction, which is when a person's age matches the age of a parent or loved one when they died. The remarkable power of age-matching anniversary reactions arising from the loss of a parent in childhood was demonstrated to me when I began training as a psychologist nearly 40 years ago. I had been treating a severely depressed man who, for many months, was not responsive to intensive psychotherapy or medication. Upon discovering with the patient that his depression began at a time in which his age matched his father's age of death, the depression miraculously lifted. Beneath his depression lay a myriad of fears that he would be like his father, which included dying at the same age of his father as well as guilt that he was not like his father and could live a full life. Although he had been unaware of the age factor, his painful feelings seemed to recreate the trauma of his father's death, which was too overwhelming for him to feel when he was ten years old.

One of the reasons that grief happens to be triggered by external reminders, such as in anniversary reactions, is because grief is an emotion that sends a vague alert to help you to remember, rather than to forget. Even so, what most people do with grief is attempt to forget--to get over it--which is quite contrary to the purpose of the emotion. Rather than try to forget, one must attempt to remember and accept what the emotion is trying to convey. There are many ways to remember. You can remember what you learned from the person you lost, remember what you enjoyed, and you can cry if you feel like crying. Even if your grief is about a relationship gone bad, there is always something that you can learn through recollection.

There are related themes of loss that people express, and later grief responses related to those losses, such as the many women and men who have given up a child for adoption. The child's birth date does not pass by without an emotional reaction, whether or not they recognize it at the time. Similarly, the date a child would have been born for a childless woman who has had a miscarriage can trigger grief. The experience of loss when a relationship ends can be triggered on the former partner's birthday, on the anniversary of when you met, or on any holiday.

Whenever I am bothered by the thought of just how misguided the notion of stages of grieving can be, I remember one patient in particular who wanted help with the depression she had every summer, which at the time she told me was when her 12-year old child had died 25 years before. She sought therapy because she was convinced that something was wrong with her. Every June, for 25 years, she had experienced a grief response. Simply knowing that she wasn't crazy because of the intense emotions she felt made it a bit easier the next time June arrived. Rather than try to get rid of her painful feelings at the time, instead she learned to think about exactly what she would do to remember her son.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow sums up the lifelong experience of grief in the first 3 lines of his poem,

Secret Anniversaries Of The Heart:

*The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart;
The secret anniversaries of the heart.*

Presidents Report

- *Cherrie Cran*

Hi everyone and welcome to the last newsletter for 2017. This newsletter covers the remainder of the year, and as we see all the decorations already out in the shops we'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and let you know we are thinking of you at this time. The holiday season can be difficult after you've lost someone – their absence seems to intensify and if this is your first year without them it can be very difficult. Please know that you will get through this.

Our Facebook community has grown to over 17,000 and is attracting more than 100 new people each week. If you haven't yet joined our Facebook community, please visit us and know that we are there online, operating as an online support group to people from all over the world.

Newsletters

If anyone has anything they would like us to publish in this newsletter please send them through to secretary@sosbsa.org.au as we are always looking for newsletter content.

Membership

If you aren't yet a financial member I'd like to encourage you to join us. Our association is run completely by volunteers and we don't receive any on-going funding. We rely completely on our membership fees and donations to operate and provide support to those who need us.

Fundraising

We are always looking for ways to raise funds, so if anyone has any ideas for fundraising please let us know. If you wish to make a donation or become a member, you can do so on our website at www.sosbsa.org.au Under the 'about us' tab you will see Membership and Donations if you hover over the 'about us' tab. All donations of \$2 and over are tax deductible.

Christmas Function

This year we will be doing something a little different for Christmas. Friday 15th December is scheduled as a support group meeting, instead we will have our Christmas celebration that night.

Location : Healthy Options, 374 Annerley Road Annerley

Time: 7:30pm

What to bring: Please bring a plate of food to share and drinks.

Please be aware that this is a drug and alcohol free premises, so alcohol will not be permitted.

Take care and be kind to yourself

Cherrie xoxo



Brisbane Support Group
(473 Annerley Road Annerley)

Friday fortnightly at 7:30pm

October – 6, 20

November – 3, 17

December – 1, 15, 29

Contact: Cherrie 0423 567 055



Management Committee



President: Cherrie Cran

Vice President: Donna Cumming

Treasurer: Darrin Larney

Secretary: Sinead McMullan

Members: Vacant

Other S.O.S.B.S.A. Support Group Meetings

Cairns Support Group

Cairns Red Cross Wellbeing Centre Cnr Grove and Lake Street, Cairns
Entrance off Grove Street.

2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:30pm.

Contact Fran: 4045 2955
or 0407 695 891

Bundaberg Support Group

Neighbourhood Centre
111 Targo Street, Bundaberg
2nd Wednesday of every month at 10:30 am

Contact Peter: 07 4155 1015

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Membership

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Pensioner / Student | \$20 |
| Adult member | \$30 |
| Family | \$50 |
| Not-For-Profit Org. | \$50 |
| Affiliate Business | \$100 |

You are now able to do this all online:
www.sosbsa.org.au (About us tab/Membership)

or contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Memberships help pay for printing, copying, mailing
and our telephone help line.

SOSBSA Phone

Volunteers WANTED

We are looking for expressions of interest
regarding volunteering for our
1300 help line.

Training will be provided.

Contact secretary@sosbsa.org.au
or 1300 767 022 for more information.

Newsletter Contributions

We are always looking for articles to run in our newsletter. If you would like to share something or found something you think might benefit others please email me at secretary@sosbsa.org.au.

SOSBSA Facebook

We now have more than **17,600** people who follow us on facebook.

Join in our online support group.

Search **SOSBSA**



Other Suicide Support Groups

If our support groups don't meet your needs – please check our website for a list of other support groups across Australia

Go to www.sosbsa.org.au

*Hover over 'Support Groups' in the top bar
Choose the appropriate sub-section.*

Please note – this information is only as good as the information we are provided – if you see errors please let us know at secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Items for Sale

You can now purchase items from us online with payments through paypal
www.sosbsa.org.au ('Items for Sale' tab)

Mourning Dove Pin

Purchase one of our beautiful pewter Mourning Dove pins to honour and remember your loved one

\$8.00 each (+\$3 postage)



Grief's Little Emergency Kit

Gentle reminders to keep us strong.
Fits perfectly into a handbag or drawer.
A small gift to give someone who grieves when you feel lost for words

\$4.00 each (+\$3 postage)



or email us at secretary@sosbsa.org.au

Lookin



How I Feel

Sometimes I just wish, I could run away and hide.

No matter where I go though, these feelings stay inside.

How can I stay here and live each day a lie,
When all I want to do is close my eyes and die?

I see the pain I cause you, with every tear I shed.

I plead with you now mum, let me go instead?
I wish I could take you with me, to a happy place,

Whether it exists though, is time for me to face.

Can I ask for your forgiveness? For you to set me free,

It may seem ungrateful, but this life's not meant for me.

Thank you for all your love, for all the time we shared,

It means the world to me, to know that someone cared.

- Lyn

(from familyfriendpoems.com)

Grieving in the Second Year After a Loss

- *griefincommon.com (blog)*

There is a pretty well-accepted theory on grieving that the first year is the hardest. The loss is so new, the first months can be spent in a blur of shock and disbelief.

This can be especially true for a sudden loss, but can surprise people when they are in "shock" even after a loved one has died following a long and drawn out illness.

I've said it many times: nothing, and I mean NOTHING, can prepare us for the finality of death.

Navigating that first year, through anniversaries, birthdays and holidays can feel endless. But the assumption for most is that as long as they can get through that, it should be smoother sailing in the days ahead.

And then year 2 happens.

The second Mother's Day without a mom. The second wedding anniversary without a spouse. A second Christmas without a child. And the griever may find themselves thinking, "this isn't any easier".

Some people have told me that the second year was actually more of a challenge. Perhaps because of expectation – expecting to feel better and then feeling even more disappointed and sad when they didn't. Or maybe it's because the more time passes, the longer we've had to live without that person. The longer it's been since we've seen them or heard their voice.

This is a terrifying thought for the newly bereaved, to think that it's not going to be a steady climb upwards in grieving and healing, and I don't share this to scare those who are in their very early days.

But expectations are a big part of our mindset, even when we're not in the stages of grief. How much more do we enjoy the movie or party that we thought was going to be terrible? How disappointed are we when a long planned vacation-of-a-lifetime turns out to be not all what we would have hoped?

If ever there was a time when we need to be setting realistic expectations for ourselves, then certainly our time of grieving is one of them.

Throw away the timelines.

Don't compare yourself with those whom you know have had a loss. The coworker who was back to work smiling only a few days after her Dad died? She was crying every day on the way to and from work. The family member who thinks that 18 months after your husband died you should be dating again? She has no idea what this loss feels like, what your love felt like, or what is right for you.

Be patient with yourself. Be patient with those who don't understand. Don't expect today to be hard and tomorrow to be easy. Honor wherever you are right in this moment and know that even if it feels uncomfortable, unsettling and uneasy, that it's probably exactly where you need to be.

Stay open to the idea of hope and optimism – but don't set a timeline for its arrival.



This Basket Of Burdens



My Basket of burdens
Is filled with the grief of my loss
It is so heavy to carry
Although this road I must cross.

This pathway through life
Feels unbearable at times
And I don't have the strength
For this mountain I climb.

The Basket's filled with sorrow
Oh, how I miss my love
At first,
It's impossible to carry,
Where is my help from above?

It's draining my strength
I can't do anymore
This pain goes so deep
Right down to my core.

As I carry this Basket
I'll learn to manage the weight
Each step of the way
Will become easier they say.

But how do they know,
Have they been here before?
If so, where's their Basket
They're responsible for?

This Basket of burdens
You can't see and can't touch
I carry it inside me
This pain is too much.

Patience is needed to carry
This loss that I feel
A shoulder to lean on
So, someday I will heal.

God sent my family
My friends and spirits unknown
So, I won't carry this Basket
For-ever alone

Someday,
I'll lay down my Basket
With burdens' no more
My pain will be gone
When, I cross through that door

Then I'll know reason
For my Basket of Burdens
How God showed me His grace
When I couldn't cope with the season

Love and support that He gave
When His presence felt unknown
He was with me each step
When I felt so alone

- Debbie
(from familyfriendpoems.com)

In Memoriam



If you would like an 'in memoriam', please send an anniversary record to us at

For everyone whose anniversary of their loved one is during October to December : On this anniversary of your loved one's death, may you remember the best experiences you shared, the most meaningful words that were spoken, the happiest moments you had together and the comfort that has given you the courage to go on.

If you wish to receive this newsletter via email, please email us at
secretary@sosbsa.org.au

QLD Helplines

Standby Brisbane 07 3250 1856

Standby Response Service 0438 150 180

(24 hour mobile crisis response to suicide bereavement.)

Sunshine and Cooloola Coasts 0407 766 961

National Helplines

LifeLine: 13 11 14 (24 hour)

Mensline: 1300 789 978 (24 hour)

Suicide Callback Line: 1300 659 467 (24 hour)

National Hope Line: 1300 467 354 (24 hour bereavement support)

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636

Kids Help Line: 1800 55 1800 (24 hour)

SANE Helpline: 1800 18 SANE (M-F 9am-5pm)