

## **Good Grief**

### **Tending to Pain and Loss**

Everyday life carries “normal” losses and grief and its important we work to validate and honor all the pains we carry in our hearts, all the loss we encounter. There is also grief that goes beyond what we consider the natural order of things; accidents and illnesses, man-made disaster, violent crimes, suicides, and the like that changes everything. The life you knew and expected to unfold disappears. Life will never be the same again. Wherever you are in your grief it’s ok. Your reality and process for grief is uniquely yours. Grief is not something to get over or fix. It is something we tend to and live with.

Grief is a part of love. Love for life, love for self, love for others. What you are living, painful as it is, is love. And love can be really hard. Excruciating at times. The following resources are intended to be source of love and grace as you tend to you pain. Although everyone experiences grief, the grief you feel is yours alone – unique to the pain and loss you experienced. Your way of tending to your grief is right only for you. Do what you need to do when you need to do it. Remember, you are loved!

**Pain vs Suffering: One Gets Tended; One Gets “Fixed”** – Pain is a healthy, normal response to loss. Suffering comes when we thrash around inside our pain causing greater pain, anxiety, fear, and isolation. Suffering also comes with all the stuff that gets loaded on us by friends and family and even strangers who, with the best intentions, correct, judge, or give advice on how we need to grieve better. Things to try in tending to the pain, include;

- **Acknowledge the Pain** – Unacknowledged and unheard pain doesn’t go away. That grief is painful doesn’t make it wrong. Pain is a normal and healthy response to loss. The way to survive grief is by allowing pain to exist, not in trying to cover it up or rush through it. Find ways to acknowledge your grief – journaling, art, counseling, telling a friend, talking out loud, support group – or whatever is most helpful to you.
- **Wellness vs Worseness** – Gather data as you go throughout your day/week. What thoughts, actions, people, circumstances make you feel saner and what makes you feel crazy? What things increase suffering, which allow you to hold your pain more gentle? What brings about wellness? Once you have identified and classified these things draw near to those that bring wellness and steer clear of the things that cause suffering.
- **Self-care Manifesto** - Create your own self-care manifesto. Write it out and post it somewhere...everywhere. Practice daily. It can be as short as two words: practice kindness, or a love letter to yourself. Consider these questions; 1) How will I show myself kindness? What does kindness look like today, this moment? 2) What do I need most in this moment? 3) How can I best care for my body/health right now? 4) How can I calm my mind? 5) What kind of person do I want to be for myself and for others? 6) What would living this well look like?
- **Support System** – It’s heavy work surviving and tending to grief. Identify your needs and then ask people who can help you meet those needs. Whether it’s a listening ear, routine tasks, a friend to attend an event, or an unusual request find the people who can offer support and care.
- **Offer Grace** – Grace is courteous goodwill, an unmerited gift of favor. First, offer yourself grace. Show yourself kindness, compassion, and love. Second, offer grace to others. They are likely doing the best they can as they try to be helpful. What would it look like to love yourself better and love others the same way?