PERMISSION TO GRIEVE

“It’s time to get on with your life and pull yourself together.” This is advice you may have been given or have said to yourself. So you close the door on your grief, only to have it appear in the window. Like a broken bone, a broken heart needs immediate attention and sufficient time to heal. The only way past your grief is working your way through it. Grief needs healing attention; permission to grieve, understanding, patience, and compassion.

1. **Know what to expect.** Although grief can be accompanied by intense emotions, grief itself is not a feeling. It is a process, a slow journey of letting go of the physical part of someone who was very significant to you. Grief is natural sorrow. It is a part of loving and being loved.

2. **Befriend your grief.** Emotions of grief can be frightening. It’s tempting to turn off the intense emotions or grief by throwing yourself into work, household routines, using alcohol etc. The feelings you bury will not go away. They can affect your physical, mental and spiritual health. Taking the time to grieve allows you to admit how deep your loss is and eventually allows you to face life with renewed hope. Do not grieve alone. Seek the company of people who understand, who have been there. Join a support group. Place yourself in the presence of a God who understands and grieves with you. God will extend an ongoing embrace of compassion.

3. **Let the tears flow.** God gave us a precious gift to ease grief and loss: “Tears.” Jesus wept when Lazarus died. When the Jews saw Jesus weeping they said, “Look how he loves him.” Tears testify to your love for the one who died. Unshed tears can lead to physical, mental and spiritual illness. Tears can help heal the death of a loved one.

4. **Applaud each small step.** Look back every few months to see how far you have come on your healing journey. Applaud yourself for every small step you accomplished. Allow yourself to take time away when you are weary as Jesus did. The grieving journey also means caring for yourself. The person who died was a significant part of you. A part of your heart is missing. You need to take time to attend to your broken heart in quietness and trust in God’s understanding.

   Some day you will look into a mirror and see someone who has walked the long path of grief recovery and has arrived at a gentle place of peace. You will see in your eyes and by the smile on your face that a transformational healing has taken place.

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