

## *Grief is the Process of Healing*

Grief, like death, is misperceived and misunderstood by most of our society. We think we understand and know its meaning, but we hope that just a “quick look” is all that is necessary. We’re uncomfortable when someone wants to “dwell” on either death or grief. It makes us a bit squirmy. And that’s interesting, considering that grief and death, like birth, are universal experiences.

Most people identify grief as a negative state – something we need to get over, get out of, get through. Often people want to distract us from our grief or “take our mind off it.” People think of grief as a bad feeling that can and should be replaced by other, “better” feelings.

Grief is not, in fact, a feeling. It’s a process. Grief is many feelings, fighting over the relatively small piece of real estate that is one human being’s psyche. Most often people identify grief as the yearning and sadness that comes with the loss of someone you love. But grief is also anger, disappointment, frustration, relief, sadness, longing, rage, withdrawal, inertia, manic energy, impatience, sensitivity, compassion and wearing your heart on your sleeve, confusion, lack of focus, recklessness, exaggerated fears and anxieties, hopelessness, desperation, a feeling that we have been treated unfairly, peacefulness, a kind of quiet, the budding of hope, acceptance and reconciliation, and resting in the care of those who care. Grief is a concerto, a symphony, an entire universe of feeling.

Ironically, given all its bad press, grief *is* the process of healing. We heal by going into our grief – not by avoiding it, skipping through it, or denying it. Grief is not something we do instead of recovering – it’s *how* we recover and reinvest in and recreate ourselves. The rhythm of grief is not unlike the pains and rhythm of childbirth. It is our grief that eventually gives birth to the awkward and fledgling beginnings of our new and different lives. When we grieve, we are becoming something different than we were. Grief does not leave us as, or where, it found us.

Grief does not end – for most of us. We get good at it. We get good at making it part of lives. We learn to live with grief, and out of that brush with mortality and vulnerability, we might even learn to live more deeply. It is an experience that, although difficult, is as full of meaning as other important passages in our lives.