

64 Myths About Grief That Just Need To STOP

UNDERSTANDING GRIEF / UNDERSTANDING GRIEF : LITSA WILLIAMS

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Grief myths . . . they drive me crazy. There are just so many of them, they come out in so many ways, and they make our grief so much more difficult. Friends and family have unrealistic expectations about what our grief will look like because of these myths. Heck, sometimes WE have unrealistic expectations because of these myths. So today we are setting out to dispel the myths in one of our favorite types of post – [a 64-things post](#)! 64 myths about grief, to be exact. In writing this post I had already come up with several dozen myths when I asked our fantastic readers on facebook for their two cents. Within a couple of hours there were well over 100 more myths. So, needless to say, this list is not exhaustive. As a side note, many facebook fans noted things that were not exactly myths, but rather things that are NOT helpful to say to a griever. We have [a list of what not to say to someone grieving](#), so feel free to check that out too, and of course check out [the illustrated version](#). Disclaimer: what makes many of the things on this list myths is that they are not universally true. This does not mean they are never true. This is a very very important distinction, so keep it in mind as you read. Also, there are some common themes with these myths so, where applicable, I have clustered the myths by theme if it made sense to do so. Okay, as Eleanor would say, let's dive in! You'll notice many of these are linked to articles that go in depth about the myth, so make sure to click the hyperlinks if you want to learn more.

1. Grief has an endpoint.

Sorry friends, grief is forever. This isn't a bad thing, though! It just means that when we lose something we loved deeply, that loss will be with us in some way forever. Grief may feel different or become more manageable, but it will always be there and that's okay. Too bad people often make us feel like we should have reached the "end" of our grief.

2. Once you are done grieving, life will return to "normal".

3. There is a [consistent and predictable timeline for grief](#).

4. The first year is the worst.

5. Time heals all wounds.

6. You recover from grief like you recover from a cold, it gets a little better every day until it completely goes away.

Nope, not true either. There are ups and downs, good days and bad days, good months and bad months. No matter how much we wish it was, grief isn't a straight line and the end point isn't "all better".

7. If you are still talking about your loved one after ____ years it means you're "stuck".

8. If you still display photos of your loved one after ____ years it means you're "stuck".

9. If you haven't gotten rid of your loved one's belongings after ____ years it means you're "stuck".

10. If you still cry when you think/talk about your loved one after ____ years it means you're "stuck".

11. Women grieve more than men.

12. Men don't want to talk about their grief.

13. You can only grieve a death.

14. You can't grieve something you never had.

You can obviously click the link to learn more about this, but here is the gist because this one can sound a little confusing: we grieve things we never had all the time. If I always thought I would have children, then learn I can't get pregnant, that is a loss I will grieve. If I always imagined my future would look a certain way and it doesn't, I grieve what I imagined it would be. You get the idea.

15. Your friends and family will always be the best support.

16. Someone who experienced the same type of loss will definitely be supportive and understand what you're going through.

EEK, this one gets people into trouble A LOT. Just because someone also lost a child, a spouse, a parent, a pet, whatever, it doesn't mean your experiences will be the same. Heck, they may not even be similar. Sometimes people with similar losses end up being your best support, sometimes it is someone with a totally different kind of loss who you connect with. You just never know.

17. Grief follows a similar path and timeline for everyone.

18. If you aren't crying, then you aren't grieving.

Some of us aren't criers, get over. It doesn't mean there is something wrong with us.

19. If you aren't following "The 5 Stages of Grief" it is a problem.

MANY people don't follow the 5 stages. If they do, it is often not in order, they may skip steps, repeat steps, you get the idea. This is just one theory about grief among many theories – you aren't grieving wrong if your grief doesn't fit in this box.

20. The only grief theory is Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' 5 Stages because everyone knows it's accurate.

21. Grieving is a problem.

Nope, it is a natural reaction to loss. We all, sadly, go through it. Just because something is painful doesn't mean we should avoid or ignore it.

22. The goal of grief is to "move on".

23. The goal of grief is to "get over it".

24. The goal of grief is to "find closure".

Ah, the myth of closure, moving on, and getting over it. Didn't we mention from the get go that there is no endpoint? We never tie up our grief with a nice little bow and move on. That just isn't how it works. What we do is learn to carry it with us in meaningful and healthy ways. We use it to continue a connection with the person we loved, while moving forward.

25. Certain types of loss are inherently "better" or "worse" than other types of loss.

26. Young children don't grieve.

27. Children should not attend funerals.

28. Children are resilient, you don't need to worry about them.

The good news, children certainly can be very resilient. The myth? That it doesn't take effort, work, or support. I once heard someone (I wish I could remember who . . . leave a comment if you know the source of this!) compare resiliency in children to children's ability to learn a language. It is much easier for children to learn languages than adults, but this does not mean they will learn a language if we don't teach, coach and support them. I have always liked this analogy. Research shows us that childhood trauma can impact us through adulthood in countless ways, psychological and

physical. We need to give children the appropriate time, attention and tools to cultivate that resiliency.

29. Not having a funeral will hinder your ability to grieve or “find closure”.

30. You grieve less when you know in advance someone is going to die.

31. You grieve less when the person who died is older and “lived a long life”.

32. Your grief is easier when someone was suffering, because you are relieved they aren’t suffering anymore.

33. When someone dies by suicide it is their own fault or they were “selfish”.

34. When someone has a miscarriage, it was likely brought on by not taking care of themselves, stress, taking birth control, lifting something heavy, or some other ridiculous myth.

35. People don’t grieve after a miscarriage in the same way they grieve other deaths.

36. If something helped another grieving person, it will help you.

37. If something helped you while you were grieving, it will be helpful to most other people who are grieving.

38. Keeping a journal always helps.

39. Going to therapy or a support group is always helpful.

40. Art therapy always help, music therapy always help, etc.

41. You can get a prescription that will help your grief.

Nope, but wouldn’t that be nice if there was a magic pill to cure our grief? Now, it is true that grief can exacerbate other underlying mental health conditions, like depression and anxiety. Those are things that absolutely can be treated with medication. It is important if you are struggling to see a professional.

42. Once you get through all the “firsts” (first anniversary, birthday, holiday season) they will get easier and easier.

43. Grieving and mourning are the same thing.

44. Just because someone looks okay when they are grieving it means they feel okay.

45. When you lose a spouse, if you haven't started dating after _____ years it means you're stuck.

46. After losing a spouse you need to start dating in order to "move on".

47. After the death of a child, having another child lessens your grief.

48. Being reminded that your loved one "wouldn't want you to be sad" is helpful.

49. The best thing you can do is say something comforting, positive, or optimistic to a griever.

50. Grief is the same as sadness.

Don't get me wrong, sadness is *part* of grief, but grief and sadness are not the same thing. Grief is so much more than sadness, for so many reasons.

51. Grief is the same as depression.

52. Grief is a single emotion.

53. Once someone dies, you can no longer have a relationship with them.

54. When someone dies you will always feel their presence if you are attuned to it.

55. If you have faith in God it will lessen your grief.

56. Grief is, ultimately, always a transformative and positive experience that will eventually make you a better person.

Okay, this one is not me being a negative Nancy. Sometimes grief really is positive and transformative and we can reflect on all the ways it has made us a better person. That is a wonderful and amazing thing when it happens. That said, not everyone finds or embraces transformation in grief.

57. You cannot grieve someone who is still alive.

58. People like faith leaders, teachers, doctors and counselors all have training in grief and understand what you're going through.

Ahhh how we wish this were true. Sadly, many professions listed above require NO formal training in grief! None. Zero. Zip. Doctors? Nope, not required. Counselors? Unless they are specializing in grief, usually not required for them either. Scary, we know!

59. If you avoid grief and keep a stiff upper lip, it will eventually go away.

60. If a widow or widower has photographs of their late husband or wife up around the house it means they aren't ready to get involved in a new relationship.

61. When kids are involved, it's important to stay strong and focus all your attention on their grief.

62. God never gives us more than we can handle

63. After a death, you will always feel a rush of strong emotions.

64. Eventually you will stop noticing and/or being affected by grief triggers.