
ANOTHER DAY BELIEVING I will feel this way forever

DR. BOB BAUGHER

Minor warning: This is not a pleasant article to read. How can it be? It's about grief.

You miss him. You miss her. You remember the day, the hour, the moment it happened. You go back to it sometimes because you just need to, sometimes because you cannot help it.

You reexperience the moment that changed your life forever and the life of your family and everyone who knew this person. Forever.

There are moments when
you cannot believe it. It's like
a dream—a nightmare.

Your head goes numb, your heart aches, your stomach drops. You feel empty.

YOUR DAY

You awaken at night and it hits you again. You awaken in the morning and for a split second you've forgotten, but then the reality strikes your brain and again you know. You know this is real. The pain is raw. You lift the covers and slowly get out of bed. Another day. If you are sleeping with

someone, you look over at this person, and you know that soon they too will awaken from the temporary escape of sleep and be hit again with the harsh reality. However, for a moment, in the early light of morning, you watch this person sleep in peace, unaware of what pain awaits upon regaining consciousness. And, as you gaze at this sleeping partner, you feel so sorry. Sorry for their suffering, sorry for their pain, for the tears that will continue to flow. And it hurts you. It's part of your grief. Their grief is your grief.

You head to the bathroom. Your body—despite its grief—demands that you must do things for it. You visit the toilet, perhaps the shower and then you dress. Your heart is heavy. You wonder why you should continue to live. And, if you do continue to live, you wonder how you will live in such pain.

Time and again, your brain turns to the inevitable question: Why? Why did this happen? Why? Why? You see his face, her face and you begin to tear up. Now dressed you head to the kitchen. You consider breakfast—Coffee? Cereal? Eggs? Nothing? Why eat? What good will it do? It will only keep you alive to live in this pain.

You walk out the door. You look up and down the street at parked cars, trees, sky and you wonder what good it is to live another day. You feel so all alone. You have things to do. For a moment, the thought comes up, "Maybe I'll just stay home." The thought is quickly answered, "And do what? Just sit here all day. Cry? Look at pictures when we were all so happy? Find some way to distract? A movie? Text someone? YouTube? Facebook? Go back to sleep?"

GETTING TO WORK

But you get in your car and suddenly you are moving, heading to work. You know when you get there one horrible fact will remain: He is dead. She is gone. It is forever. There is nothing. Nothing. Nothing you can do to change that.

As you drive, you see men and women and kids walking, chatting looking at their phones, oblivious to your pain, clueless to the fact that, in the next instant, their lives too could change and just like that they will know some of what you know only too well. They too will know suffering, heartache, yearning. Like you, they will want once again to look into the precious face of their loved one, to hug, to feel this person's body touch theirs, and to say, "Everything is going to be okay." But you are back to the present moment as you arrive at work and force yourself to put one foot in front of the other. As you settle into the work day, you know that you will run into co-workers who will do one of four things:

1. Ask how you are doing—and not want to know.
2. Pretend you are okay.
3. Ignore you.
4. Ask how are you really doing and mean it.

Whichever happens, all you know is that, once the interaction is over, you are back where you began—in pain, feeling devastated, but knowing you just can't show it right now.

HOME

You push through the day. Perhaps you break down a few times and cry. You head home. Then dinner. You know that if the dinner conversation moves toward your loved one, you run the risk of breaking down or seeing others at the table acknowledge their own pain. Eventually, you head to bed knowing that tomorrow will be no different.

WHAT IS GRIEF?

You know what grief is: it is pain, it is missing, it is the body aching to have this beloved person back in your life.

You know that loss affects everyone. But right now, it's affecting you. And you are drowning in it. It is in every cell of your body. Even though you have found ways to distract and ignore the finality of this loss, the reality returns: He is never coming back. She will never be standing across from you again. Never. Never.

Every moment of every day you are convinced that you will feel this way forever. Of course you will. How could you ever not feel this way? Constant pain is your daily experience. You begin to realize that the memories of your loved one are tightly interwoven with your pain and if the pain begins to diminish, you may feel a sense of panic. Why is this? Because you may have come to believe that if the pain diminishes, so will the memories. As a result, you hold onto and cling to the pain because every degree that pain lessens can feel like you are losing your grip on your loved one.

LIFE CONTINUES, GRIEF CHANGES

If you are early in your grief, then the paragraph that follows contains information that may not seem possible.

As much as you believe that the pain of your grief will never change, and as the weeks turn into months, and then years, you begin to see a little progress that is best captured in the words from Grief Specialist Dr. Darcie Sims:

The first thing you think
about whenever you think
about him is that he lived,
not that he died.

In coping with your grief, you have done what is called Griefwork. That is, by living day after day (even when you didn't want to), you have been forced to confront the memories that overwhelm you with pain; and by enduring the pain, with time, it has begun to subside. You have done this in a number of ways: you talked with others who have walked a similar path, you have read articles or books, you have prayed, you have watched videos, you have looked at pictures, you have helped others in the name of your loved one, and you have survived another day.

MEMORIES

By living day after difficult day, you have begun to experience the memories of your loved one as more comforting than painful. You arrived at a point where you realize that nothing can ever take the memories from you. Ever. And you realize that even though your grief, your pain, your emptiness will never totally go away, you have lived with your grief long enough to come to a better place in your life. A place where you absolutely know that you

will forever keep the love for this person deep within you.

YOUR GRIEF

In my work with bereaved people over the past 40 years, I have met thousands of people coping with grief. Thousands. Many of them in the depths of grief. Some of them, not wanting to live, living in excruciating pain they believed would never subside. Here is the most important fact that I learned from their grief:

Someday you will feel
different. Someday you will
not feel this lousy. Not
tomorrow. And, likely not in
the next few months or
perhaps even years. But you
will.

You will look back on these times and wonder how you ever made it through. You will. For some of you reading this article, you are nodding your head, saying, "Yes, I, too, didn't believe I would someday feel different, but I do." For many of you, it still doesn't seem possible that you could ever feel any different. What I hope for you, is that you gradually come to believe in the experiences of the millions of grievers who have come before you. People like you who suffered in unremitting pain until they got to a day when it didn't quite hurt so much. Based upon the experiences of these people, that day will come for you. Until then, I wish I could offer something—anything, that could ease your pain. I know I can't. But for now, I can only give you the assurance that the day will come. It will.