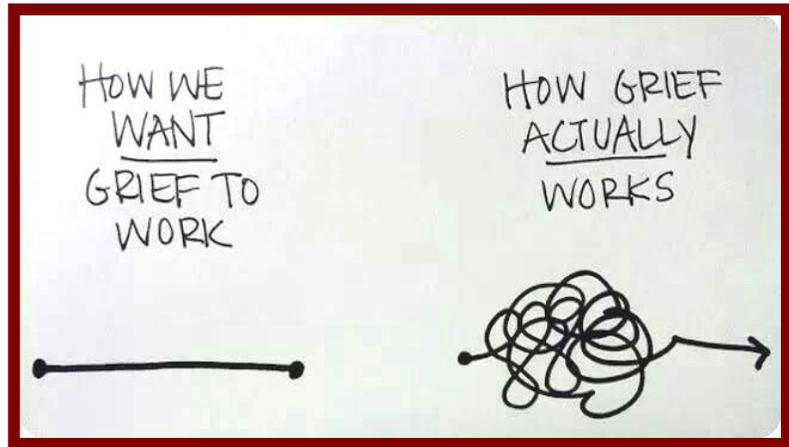


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Here are a handful of phrases we seem to hear (or say) when someone experiences a loss:

***"Grief is a journey"***

***"Bereavement has no road map"***

***"Time heals your wounds"***

***"Every day feels like a roller coaster"***

For honesty's sake, let me add a few words after each of those clichés above.

**Grief is a journey . . .**

But no one volunteers to take the trip!

**Time heals your wounds . . .**

However, the wounds you have don't care a lick about time! More importantly, what are you doing with your time?

**Bereavement has no road map . . .**

Though you may read excellent books about grief (like a compass, they'll help with directions), you'll still feel lost. Though you may receive heartfelt support from friends who've also experienced loss (and can identify grief landmarks to avoid or follow), you'll still be alone at the most unexpected of moments.

**Every day feels like a roller coaster . . .**

Really? You've got to be kidding! At least a roller coaster has a clear start, middle and finish. When will my darn grief merry-go-round (or other irritating amusement park ride metaphor) stop? Please, just tell me that!

Every image, metaphor and expert's advice will be helpful, except when it doesn't work for you. So where is the upside? What are at least a few semi-comforting words?

### **Will my grief ever end?**

No. Should I repeat that No? If you are a relatively normal and mostly caring person, you'll always grieve a beloved's death. How can you not?

At whatever point you chose to love another—perhaps for a parent at the moment of birth or love-at-first-sight for a spouse—grief entered your life. Love and loss are more than just two four-letter words, they are forever intertwined. A parent proudly watches a child enter a first day of school but also feels a twinge of grief. A husband kisses his wife goodbye at the airport, bidding “Good luck!” as she departs for a job interview, but his heart also tightens with grief. What if she's rejected, what if the plane has problems, what if \_\_\_\_\_ happens? Yes, when love first came, grief was the unseen wound marking every next heartbeat.



### **This I believe: your grief will decrease in intensity.**

The unbearable becomes bearable. The smiles will outnumber the tears again. New, and good, memories will be made.

### **I also believe: don't become isolated.**

If you need to talk, be with people willing to listen. If you need to be alone, be with those who respect your privacy. Whatever your needs, choose to be with people who will let you be yourself, in your tears now and in your laughter always.

All of us are different; healing is possible for all.

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