

A WARRIOR'S GUIDE TO GRIEF: WORKING TOWARDS ACCEPTING THE LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

Compiled by Vhutali Ndou
(Student Counselling and Development)

#WellbeingWarriors



www.ufs.ac.za/kovsiacounselling

 UFSUV |  UFSweb |  UFSweb |  ufsuv

*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE
FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE
VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA
FREISTATA



UFS
STUDENT AFFAIRS
STUDENTESAKE
DITABA TSA BATHUTI
STUDENT COUNSELLING AND
DEVELOPMENT (SCD)



The agony of losing a loved one is one of the most painful experiences any of us can go through. There are many stages that we venture through when grieving for a loved one. We can alternate between shock, denial, anger, depression, to even bargaining. Please click here for further reading on the [stages of grief](#).

The purposeful stage of grief is acceptance. Acceptance does not mean that you are "okay" with the loss of a loved one. It is a stage where you accept that your loved one is a mortal being; you work within the new reality and adapt or evolve; you embark on a journey creating a 'new normal'. Below are some tips to help you process your loss and still be able to function while dealing with bereavement.

1 Get help with the basics

During the initial stages of shock, it can be difficult to do mundane activities such as cooking, bathing, and falling asleep. For this reason, in many communities, people bring food to a bereaved family. Be with family and others who can help provide for your basic needs of eating and having a place where you can sleep. Moreover, when in shock, it can be dangerous for you to drive or cook, as the trauma alters your mental state and reduces your alertness and awareness, and you could thus unwillingly hurt yourself. Always adhere to lockdown restrictions when considering your best options, this may not be easy, but your safety is essential.



2 Do not suppress your emotions

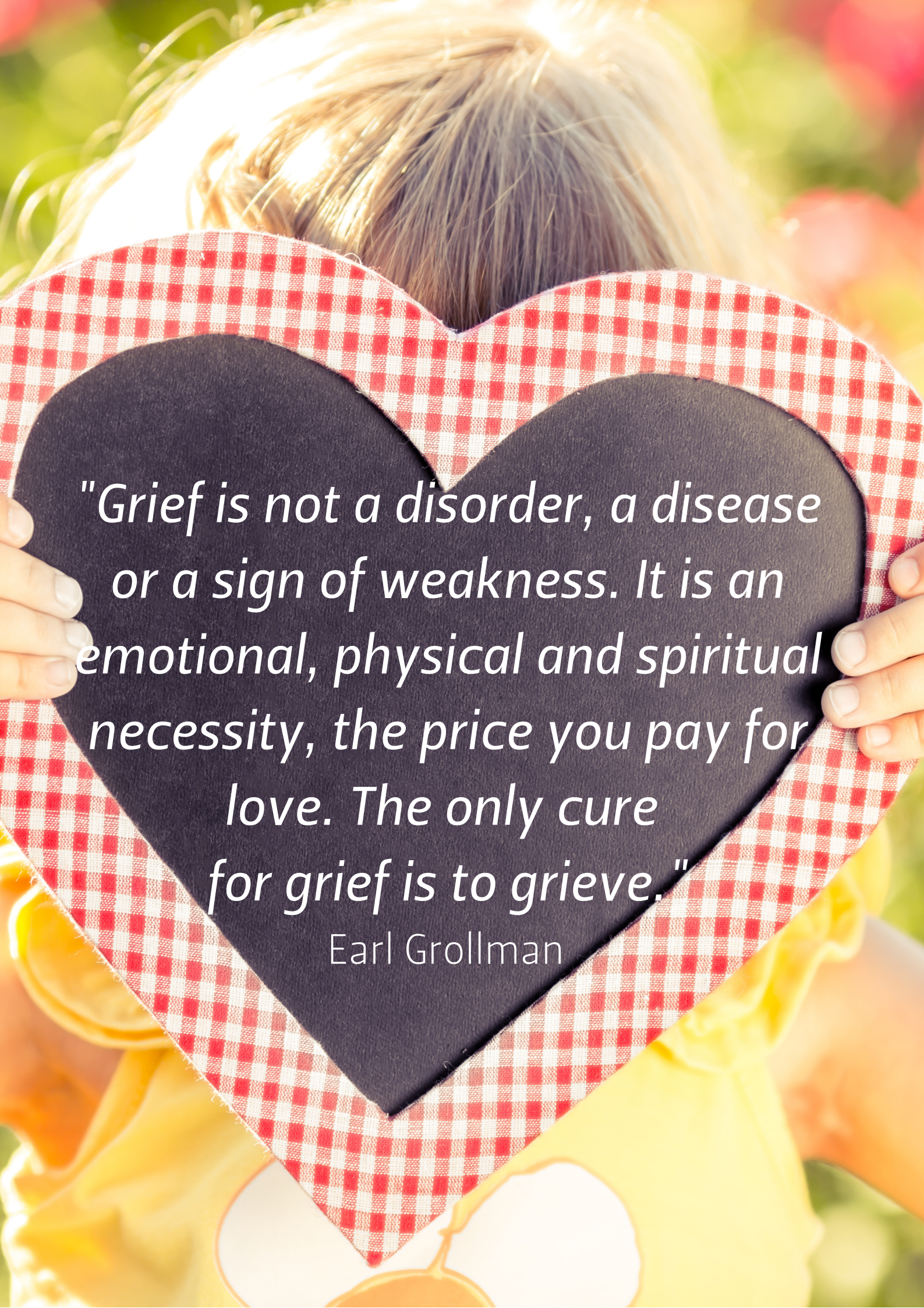
Allow yourself to cry and feel the myriad of emotions that will come. Allowing your feelings to surface is not to say you should act with the guidance of your feelings, but letting your senses help you understand what the loss means to you. Our emotions often stem from thoughts that we have, so take time to journal as this can reveal more feelings. Journaling can also help you vent if you feel anger or feel like you want to lash out.



3 Identify changes in mood and functioning

Some people may experience depression related to their grief; this is not to say that everyone who experiences loss will experience depression. You may experience prolonged sadness and hopelessness, and you may also struggle to function at school or work. It is important to seek social support or even make an appointment to speak to someone at Student Counselling & Development (SCD) (or another mental health professional), when your grief has triggered symptoms that affect your personal, interpersonal, and academic functioning. Seeking psychosocial support will give you a safe space to speak about your loss.



A person with long, light-colored hair is seen from behind, holding a large heart-shaped sign. The sign has a red and white checkered border and a dark grey center. The quote is written in white text on the dark grey background. The person is wearing a yellow garment with a large white heart pattern. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with green foliage and a bright light source.

*"Grief is not a disorder, a disease
or a sign of weakness. It is an
emotional, physical and spiritual
necessity, the price you pay for
love. The only cure
for grief is to grieve."*

Earl Grollman



4 Take time to engage in activities that replenish you

You can take time out to volunteer and do something for someone else, as this may help you feel better. You can also console yourself by listening to music, watching movies, praying, meditating, or reading books.

5 Remembrance Activities

You will be more likely to miss your loved ones on their birthday or anniversary of their death. Here are some ideas on how you can cope during those times:

- You can visit their final resting place or the place where their ashes are scattered.
- You can have a tombstone unveiling or hold a special remembrance ceremony
- You can write a blog or a letter.
- Eat at their favourite place or engage in their favourite activity.
- You can also look through old pictures.
- Make a Memory Box and fill it with reminders of your loved one.

Death and grieving a loved one is, unfortunately, part of life, which makes it crucial to equip yourself with healthy ways to deal with this enormous loss. I hope that this article will help you begin your process of grieving. If you find these tips helpful for you, do share with others who might benefit from them.

"To live in hearts we leave behind, is not to die."

Thomas Campbell

Contact us at:

+27 51 401 2853 / +27 58 718 5032 / +27 51 505 1298
scd@ufs.ac.za / scdq@ufs.ac.za / scdsouth@ufs.ac.za