



The Grief River

Grief is a natural part of our human experience – it is universal as well as personal and unique to each of us. As well renowned grief expert David Kessler expresses, “Grief is change, a change we didn’t want”.

Grief not only pertains to death of a loved one, but to many aspects of our lives – transitions in relationships, family, ability, traumas, changes in self, and losses of any kind. Too often in our society we place the expectation on ourselves and others to “get over it” or “move on” – if only we had a magic wand to do so immediately. This expectation, or an avoidance of our natural feelings, can complicate grief and well-being further. As David Kessler puts it, “there’s no bypass around the pain”.

Grief is like a river – ongoing & often changing; it can have turbulence, flow, rapids, and unexpected fluctuations. Sometimes grief is more complicated, sometimes totally different than we might have expected.

According to well-renowned Grief expert, David Kessler, there are six elements that support a healthy grief process:

Community - having a variety of kinds of connection available - practical, deeper, and superficial - allows us to grieve more effectively

Continued connections – to talk about/to a loved one, share memories, or photos, notice in our present life the things that person loved, or reflect on how they would feel about something in the present

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Your grief does not define you – as intense as it can be, our grief is not our sole identity; notice and tend to the other aspects of who you are and other relationships/roles in your life as well

Treat yourself as your best friend – One of the elements that supports a healthy grief process is to treat ourselves as our best friend – self-compassion and kindness allow us to be with our feelings and grieve with grace.

Don't compare – when you compare “even if you win you lose”; grief is very personal & unique for everyone, every kind of loss, losses at different times in life, the same loss may appear differently for each family member

Count your wins – may be small or big, notice our own process and provide self-support over self-judgment

There are commonalities that help support healthy grief & healing, but there is no one “correct” way to grieve. Let us support ourselves and one another in moving forward with more love than pain, and to be with our feelings with grace and compassion.

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