



The Grieving Journey

from Greene County Council on Aging Fall 2022

Counting Time After a Death

After my spouse died, I noticed that I counted time in a way that I never had before following the loss of a loved one. My awareness of the passing of days, weeks, months, and seasons since the day of my love's death became well developed. Five days, four Sundays, eight weeks, three months, six months, two seasons, one winter, one Christmas, two birthdays, one wedding anniversary. With each distinct time awareness came the thought, "how could they be gone so long already, how could this be?" Logically I understood completely, but emotionally I was in disbelief; how could my love of 24 years suddenly be gone from my life?

Poet laureate, Donald Hall, in his book *Without*, wrote with a very similar awareness of lapsing time after his wife, Jane Kenyon, died. When I read his words about 2 years after my loss, I was relieved that he and I shared this time sensitive thinking. It was comforting to know that others thought this way too - there wasn't anything wrong with me and my seemingly odd calculations and ruminations.

Grief puts us in another realm for the first year, or two, or three as we integrate our loss and step into a future that is different than what we expected it would be. The counting of time goes on, even as we go about our new life. The big anniversaries of 5, 10, 15 years come and go, and we still shake our heads

in disbelief and say to ourselves, yet again, "how is it possible that they have been gone 15 years, how could this be?"



As time has gone by, I've had fewer and fewer moments when I am aware of the passing of time regarding my spouse's death. Now, so many years later, I am mainly aware of his birthday, our anniversary, and the anniversary of his death. And, to be completely honest, sometimes I have forgotten, or I thought about "the day" a few days or the week before but then forgot when the day arrived. I judged myself harshly the first few times that happened, but I don't anymore. My forgetting of dates says nothing bad about me. No matter how many times I forget, nothing, and I mean nothing, will take away the meaning of my marriage or how much I loved my spouse. When I remember, now 16 years later, I feel gratitude for having had a wonderful person to love, and to have been deeply loved in return. That love and gratitude are real, and they remain far longer than the awareness of a date on the calendar or the passing of seasons.

The Grieving Journey is a Greene County Council on Aging quarterly publication to accompany you in your time of bereavement after the loss of a significant person in your life.

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It is important to remember that everyone grieves differently.

Grieving is the way to healing. Grieving is hard work - it hurts to grieve. One's time of bereavement is probably the most stressful time of life.

Each person is unique. No one will have had the same relationship or experience death or loss in the same way.

Although there are many common grief reactions, no two people grieve exactly alike. Friends and relatives may give advice as to how to grieve, but it is important to remember that grieving is personal — and only the individual knows what they are feeling.

It is important to remember that there are no wrong feelings. All feelings are valid and are a part of the grieving process.

There is no correct time frame for grieving. Some people will reorganize and gain new interest in life in a year — others will take 2 years or more.

There is no such thing as “getting over it.” People who experience loss are changed forever. They may recover, but they will never be the same as they were before the loss of a loved one. Loss of a loved one is eventually integrated into the person’s life experience in a similar way that other major changes impact a life.

It is not uncommon for a recent death to elicit memories or feelings of grief from previous losses. Perhaps there is still more grieving to be done regarding the old loss.



Nothing Gold Can Stay by Robert Frost

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

GCCOA Grief Support Group

Group meetings are open to all those who have lost a loved one. Meetings are on the 2nd Monday of the month, 10am until noon, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton Xenia Road, Beavercreek (lower level). Participation is limited and advance registration is required. Please call the Council to learn more.

We hope you find this publication helpful, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues.
Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.