



Take Time to Grieve

For all we do individually and as a nation in the aftermath of the terrible tragedies in New York and Washington, D.C., we cannot ignore or hurry our grief.

Grief is a complex process. When a tragedy occurs, not only do we grieve for the victims but, also, our own buried hurts may be reawakened. We re-grieve from our previous losses.

Some say that the passage of time is the great emotional healer. In fact, it's what you do with that time that is important.

During grief it is common to have many conflicting feelings: sorrow, anger, loneliness, anxiety, even guilt. Experiencing waves of these often confusing emotions can make us feel out of control. In an attempt to regain a sense of control, we may deny the feelings. Also, in our culture, we often assume if something is painful, it must be bad. Yet suppressing these feelings and denying the need to grieve can be even harder on both the mind and body than going through the emotions. Pain is a natural part of the grieving process and, if we are to heal, we must allow it.

Seeking Help

We can help one another during the grieving process by talking about our feelings and listening to each other. Friends, family and especially support groups can provide invaluable comfort.

People need ritual. Lighting candles, gathering together for services or memorials, praying or singing together can provide an outlet for grief.

Spending time in nature can offer solace. Nature allows us to experience the ongoing cycle of the life/death process, and in this we may be able to connect to the larger order of the universe.

Writing in a journal or writing letters provides a place for us to set our feelings down in a concrete, physical way. Writing to the deceased allows us to say goodbye if we didn't have the opportunity. Even though we may not have

"Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak / Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break." — Shakespeare, *Macbeth*

known them, writing letters to strangers for whom we grieve can be healing.

Ask for help. You may need the guidance of a professional grief counselor or therapist to help you work through the deep and sometimes confusing emotions that accompany the grieving process. The most difficult times may come months after the actual loss.

When Grief Turns to Depression

Depression is a natural part of the grieving process. But when depression lingers or intensifies you may need additional help and counseling. Be aware of symptoms such as a deepening depression, loss of energy, sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, and feelings of restlessness, worthlessness or inappropriate guilt. If thoughts of suicide occur, seek professional help immediately.

How to Talk to Children

Children assimilate emotional pain and deal mentally with death in small doses. They will add layers of understanding as they develop emotionally and intellectually. Consequently, their grieving may take years, even into adulthood.

In the case of tragedies such as the terrorist attacks or sudden accidents, children need to know that these events are very, very rare. They need to be assured that what happened is not going to happen to them.

Use age appropriate vocabulary and give enough concrete information to help them understand what took place but not so much that they get overwhelmed.

At times of loss, children need familiar and trusted adults around them to encourage them to share their feelings and to talk about those who died.

The process of grieving can be freeing. By embracing it we have the opportunity to grow stronger so that when we must grieve again we will not lose our emotional bearings or retreat in fear. We will be able to release our hold on the past and move more fully into the present. *

10 Ways to Get a Good Night's Sleep

Seldom does time pass more slowly than when insomnia joins us in our beds. Sleeplessness can have both physical and emotional roots. Health problems, what we eat or drink, stress, or depression can get in the way of a peaceful night's rest. Following are suggestions that might help you get to sleep and stay asleep.

- 1. Structure your sleep.** Try to go to bed and arise at the same times every day.
- 2. Create a soothing bedtime routine.** Watching the news or reading the latest page-turner are not good sleep inducers.
- 3. Keep your bedroom quiet,** dark and cool and your feet warm.
- 4. Exercise during the day,** but not within several hours of bedtime.
- 5. Avoid caffeine** within at least 3-6 hours of bedtime (longer if you're caffeine-sensitive). Nicotine, sugary snacks and alcohol can also cause wakefulness.
- 6. If you do nap during the day, limit your sleep to 20 minutes.**
- 7. If worries keep you awake, try writing your concerns down.** Also list possible solutions.
- 8. Head potential anxieties off at the bedroom door;** organize what you need for the next day.
- 9. Don't work, eat or watch TV in bed.** Keep your sleeping place for sleep.
- 10. Cover your clock** so you can't see the time if you wake up in the night. Figuring how much sleep you're missing intensifies the wee-hours stress.

*(If insomnia is a persistent problem, you may need to seek professional help.) **

A Letter From *Christopher Ann Vallier* LCSW, JD



"Joy and sorrow are inseparable," wrote Kahlil Gibran, "...when one sits alone with you, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed."

Though we may be familiar with the stages of grief as identified by Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, (DABDA: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance), it's important to know that grief is not an event that follows a certain order and then is over. Grief is an internal process that is individual, and therefore follows a path of its own making and takes all the time that it needs.

Death is not the only cause for grieving. A loss of any kind can carry with it the need to mourn.

Above all else, recovering from grief takes time, but its stresses will pass more quickly with good self-care habits. As this issue's Top 10 suggests, getting a good night's rest is one of the basics for physical and emotional health.

Other topics include the need for exercise and creative expression, both of which can go a long way in releasing tension, reducing stress and relieving depression. Also, creativity can give voice to deep and sometimes conflicting emotions that we may not be able to express in other ways.

Great events — both joyful and sorrowful — call for us to open our hearts to one another. Please don't hesitate to call if you need guidance or support, or if you simply want more information.

How Well Do You Take Responsibility For Yourself?



Some years ago comedian Flip Wilson created a character named Geraldine, who excused her outrageous behavior by claiming "the devil made me do it." Poor Geraldine was helpless and ineffective because she wouldn't take responsibility for herself. In his book, *Grow Up! How Taking Responsibility Can Make You A Happy Adult*, Dr. Frank Pittman wrote, "Finding the responsible thing to do is the lifelong quest for grown-ups." Take this quiz to find out how well you take responsibility for yourself.

True False

- I believe that my actions are the primary force in how I live my life, and that I am solely responsible for my actions.
- When other people, events or circumstances affect my life, I am responsible for my reactions.
- I take responsibility for my body and for my physical well being. I eat healthfully, exercise regularly and maintain good hygiene.
- I may not always be able to select co-workers or team members, but I am responsible for the companions I choose and the company I keep.
- What I say and how I say it is my responsibility. So is listening well.
- I am responsible for my own emotions. Someone else doesn't "make" me feel a certain way.
- My behavior with others is up to me—I'm responsible whether I "go along" with the crowd or remain passive in the face of actions or behaviors I don't agree with.
- My personal happiness is my own responsibility. It's no one else's job to make me happy or to give me what I need or want to be happy.
- Everything in life is a choice, and I take responsibility for mine—both the good and the not so good. I also take responsibility for how I handle the results of my choices.
- I accept responsibility for doing the right thing even though it may not always be the easiest path.
- I am responsible for choosing the values by which I live.
- How I spend my time is up to me. Even though I may be required to work a certain number of hours or to be present at a specified time and place, the quality of my time is my responsibility.
- I am responsible for how I use the earth's resources and realize that my decisions have implications that reach beyond the personal to the global.
- I don't wait for someone else to make my life interesting. It's my responsibility to engage my curiosity, explore my intrigues, and follow my passions.
- The manner in which I maintain my spiritual well being is my responsibility.
- Self-responsibility includes seeking solutions when I have problems and asking for help when I need it.

Although self-responsibility may not always be easy, the results are empowering and life-affirming. If you have any questions or if you'd like to talk about your responses to this quiz, please call. ✧

Mind, Body, Spirit**The Benefits of Exercise**

What's on the list of top 10 ways to reduce stress? *Exercise.*

One of the top 10 ways to relieve anxiety? *Exercise.*

To maintain good health? *Exercise.*

Relieve depression? Build self-esteem?

Improve self-image and confidence? Reduce tension? Improve mental sharpness and alertness? Increase immunity to certain diseases and

health risks? Lose weight? Improve the quality of sleep? *Exercise. Exercise. Exercise.*

With a list like this, one might ask if there is any aspect of human life that isn't helped by regular exercise. Not according to physical and mental health experts. Anyone and everyone who is concerned with health and well being agrees: Physical activity is a vital component for optimum physical and emotional health. Regular exercise is the key to increasing the quality of life. Being active improves body, mind, and spirit.

Yet, a quarter of Americans get absolutely no exercise and nearly two-thirds get less than the recommended minimum amount of physical activity of 30 minutes several times a week. Fewer than 15 percent comply with the American College of Sports Medicine's recommendations for adult fitness.

All this may be old news to those who put "Start Exercising" at the top of their New Year's Resolutions each year, or those who say "I know I should, but..." when friends or health professionals suggest a regular exercise routine. For many, 20 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week translates into much more time than the 60 minutes it implies.

If time is your tyrant, the good news is that specialists in health and exercise matters are telling us that short bursts of exercise also can be effective.

"There's a threshold level of activity needed to gain health benefits," says John M. Jakicic, assistant professor of psychiatry and human behavior of the Brown University School of Medicine. "But it's not necessary to get all this activity at one time."

Regular bouts of 10 to 15 minutes of aerobic "sparks," such as dancing, an early morning walk, or a midday office stair climb, combined with a few strengthening exercises and stretching routines can have measurable physical and mental impact.

Though you can't expect to lose much weight or compete in 10K races with these minimum activity levels, you can improve your physical health and feel better. Parking your car at the far end of the lot and walking to the mall, taking the stairs instead of the elevator and dancing through your housework can be the start of something good. *

**If exercise is so good for us, why don't we do it?**

"No time" is the reason most people offer when asked why they don't exercise. And it's true; most of our lives are busier than ever before. But the fact is, when something is important, when we are committed, when we really want something, we find the time for it. Look beneath the easy and ready excuse and you may find more complex reasons why people won't start or can't seem to stay with a regular exercise routine.

Impatience: People want to get in great shape Right Now! Never mind that it took twenty years to get in the shape they're in.

Unrealistic Expectations: Looking for the "perfect body" is a guaranteed set-up for failure.

Denial: Many people are in denial that they might have health problems or suffer a debilitating disease.

Intimidation: The idea of failure or looking foolish or being a beginner intimidates many people into never starting an exercise program.

Bad experiences or painful memories: Experiences such as humiliation or sexual abuse, or old feelings of inadequacy or embarrassment can cause resistance to the idea of exercise.

Physical exercise is essential to good physical and emotional health and a sense of well being. If any of these reasons lay beneath the surface of your "not enough time" excuse, consider these suggestions:

- Start slowly.
- Get a buddy.
- Find an activity you like.
- Go for progress not perfection.
- Realize that it may hurt before it feels good.
- Remember healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes.
- Don't give up. If you miss a day, begin again the next day.
- Be patient. All good things take time.
- Congratulate yourself on your hard work and follow-through.
- Ask for help if you need it. *

Creativity Belongs to Each of Us

The sound may be faint as the stirring of butterfly wings or loud as a brass band on Fourth of July. Or you may not hear a sound at all, but feel an urging, an inner pull, a sense of excitement and longing that resonates from within. This is the call to create, and it is universal, bidding each of us to bring something new into being.

"Creativity is the Self searching for itself," said George Gamez, Ph.D., author of *How to Catch Lightning in a Bottle*. We create in order to express our unique visions and perceptions. We create to communicate and to form a bond with our fellow human beings. Creative expression helps us feel connected to the world and builds bridges of understanding. It nourishes us and helps us grow, provides insights and deeper understandings. Creativity is fun, exciting and playful. It relieves stress and releases tension. It provides a way of communication when normal channels may be blocked or are insufficient—when we must speak in colors and textures and shimmering visions and music.

Creativity is love expressing itself; it heals and renews. Our creations are mirrors in which others may see themselves and the signature of our lives that says, "This is how I saw it."

Everyone is creative

No matter what you may have been told, every one of us is creative. It is as much a part of us as our voice and breath and fingerprints. Creativity isn't just about making "art." Cooking, gardening, keeping a journal, handiwork and crafts are all creative acts. Arranging flowers or rearranging furniture, painting a picture or painting



a room, singing on stage or singing in the shower—these are all responses to the call.

Creativity is a way of living. It is being spontaneous and playful, exercising the imagination, finding solutions, and embracing possibilities and doing it all with passion.

Yet for all the joy and fulfillment it brings, some resist the call to be creative. In our culture the ideas that "Time is

money" and "Art is frivolous" hold certain sway and old messages like, "Stay inside the lines" or "You can do better than that" have remarkable staying power. It takes courage to look beneath the surface of what we've been told to find our heart's desire.

Creativity requires risk-taking. It asks us to surrender, to lose control and to trust. "Committing to our creativity is an act of faith," wrote Jan Phillips, in *Marry Your Muse*. "A promise to believe in ourselves."

Honoring the creative Self means finding time, making space, being patient and taking the chance of looking foolish. You cannot care too much what others think or say. You must be willing to start over and stay with it; creativity takes stamina. There are no magical secrets or absolute rules.

Creativity can't be taught. You just do it. "Creativity belongs to the artist in each of us," said Corita Kent.

Like the body's natural urge for motion and the human need for connection and community, the spirit longs to express itself. So when you hear the call to create, answer, "Yes!" It is your self searching for your Self, a movement toward being whole. ✨

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