

Failure 201—Grieving

What to do when things can't be fixed

Horatio Spafford

- This hymn was written after traumatic events in Spafford's life.
- The first was the death of their only son from Scarlet Fever in 1870.
- Second was the 1871 Great Chicago Fire which ruined him financially (he had been a successful lawyer and had invested significantly in property in the area of Chicago which was decimated by the great fire).
- His business interests were further hit by the economic downturn of 1873 at which time he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre.
- In a late change of plan, he sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire.
- While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with a sea vessel, the Loch Earn, and all four of Spafford's daughters died.
- His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone ...".
- Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died.
- The Spaffords later had three more children.
- In 1881, the Spaffords, including baby Bertha and newborn Grace, set sail for Israel.
- The Spaffords moved to Jerusalem and helped found a group called the American Colony; its mission was to serve the poor.

Principles To Remember

- There are no easy answers—BUT WE HEAL!
- There is no way to escape some level of pain—BUT WE HEAL
- Don't minimize grieving to a formula. There's no 3 step process to make grieving

less painful.

- Talk to people's hearts and hurts. Sit with them in it instead of dictate a set of behaviors.
- The bigger question we may have to see wrestle with tonight is the problem of pain. "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Definition of Grieving

- False belief—"I can't seem to get past my past."
- "Really really really really really wanting something you'll never be able to have."
- We have to accept the fact that we aren't in as much control as we would like to be.
- We are forced into something that we may not believe we are ready to experience. (Being pushed off the cliff instead of choosing to jump.)

The Purpose of Grief

- To express or confirm that what was lost was valuable. We don't mourn and grieve over dispensable things.
- Allow time to get use to a whole new way of life.
- "Time does not heal. Rather it is how we use our time to grieve that helps us to heal. This often takes longer than people around us are comfortable with."
- Is there a purpose for the pain? What is the purpose of pain?
- To bring attention that something isn't working right.
- Sometimes the bigger thing that isn't working right is the world itself. Death was not originally designed into this world. Death was given as a way to end our sinful state and to be in a perfect state again.

The Elements of Grieving

Stage 1: Shock Stage

Numbness & Denial

- The first reaction to a loss
- Numbness or shock can help cushion the blow and can help you get through the initial mourning
- This is actually your psyche protecting your mind from being overwhelmed all at once by the tragedy.
- Unable to function or perform even simple tasks or make decisions.
- You may have a sense of unreality, or feel like you are "sleepwalking".
- This stage can last a few hours, days, or even a few weeks.
- What you need in this stage:
 - family and friends to offer you support.
 - People to help you make decisions.
 - Water and toilet paper.

Stage 2: Suffering Stage

Yearning & Anger

- As the shock wears off, the pain begins.
- This is a time of emotional upheaval, and you will experience overwhelming and excruciating pain.
- Pain so palpable as to feel physical as well as emotional.
- Physical symptoms may include loss of appetite and weight, chest pain, insomnia, extreme fatigue.
- Emotional symptoms are sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, restlessness, and agitation may occur.
- The hallmarks of this phase are rapid mood swings, intense emotions and loss of control over your psyche.
- You may even feel like you are losing your sanity.
- you will yearn deeply for your lost loved one

- You may be angry and have regrets of things left unsaid or dreams never realized.

Emotional Despair, Sadness & Withdrawal

- Period of heavy sadness, silence and withdrawal from family and friends.
- Friends and family have probably gone back home to the business of living their lives.
- They may pressure you to "get over it" and "get on with your life".
- You are left to cope alone.
- What you need:
 - Seek out someone to help support you, and/or find a support group to lend an ear.
 - It is important that you not grieve alone.

Stage 3: Recovery Stage

Reorganization

- This stage is not the end of pain, but the ability to function with it and reconnect to the interesting and happy parts of life.
- Reorganization and the beginning of positive emotions
- Over time, the sadness stage will start to lessen, and you will begin to see a lightening of your emotions
- You will start to perceive your life in a more positive light
- lasts for months, and even intermittently for years. It is a normal and necessary part of grieving
- Important not to avoid it, delay it, ignore it or suppress it.
- Bouts of grief and sadness will persist, probably for the rest of your life.

Letting Go & Moving On

- Your great hurt will never be forgotten... it just recedes into the background of your life
- Other more immediate demands will start to take precedence.

- Letting go of your need for the lost loved one and to move on with your life
- You may see ONE benefit from your grief experience... a new appreciation for the preciousness of life and a new-found ability to live life in the moment.
- You've come to accept a new normal.

Things that hinder the grief cycle

- Not staying in the hospital bed
- Burying or pushing through the pain: Horror movie lesson
- Demanding that things be different.
- Focusing too much on the question "WHY?" Sometimes we won't know why until we move all the way through the process. We can only connect the dots looking backwards.
- Keeping your feelings and thoughts inside instead of talking about them with understanding people.
- Thinking you will always feel as you do in the first weeks.
- Believing that your religious faith can lessen the impact of your loss.
 - Religious faith cannot grant us immunity from loss.
 - Religious faith cannot give us back our dead loved ones or our dead relationships.
 - Religious faith cannot provide a shortcut through grief.

Helpful things to do

- Connect with a community
- Good self care
- Plan for grief triggers
 - People won't understand because it isn't a trigger for them.
 - Need to have the ability to internally validate since others won't understand in the same way.