

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

For Grief's Sake...

The defining feature of grief, which distinguishes it from all other experiences, is pining for or missing a lost person.

The bereaved person feels lost in the loss and yearns for connection.

When someone close dies grief isn't about working through a linear process that ends with 'acceptance' where you have moved on or put aside, their memory. Rather, when someone close dies you slowly find ways to adjust and redefine your relationship with that person, allowing for a continued bond that will endure, in different ways and to varying degrees, throughout your life.

In their book **Continuing Bonds: New Understandings of Grief**, authors Dennis Klass, Phyllis Silverman, and Steven Nickman observed that children who had lost a parent found ways to continue their relationship with the parent even after they were gone. The children maintained their connection by cherishing memories, talking to the parent, believing the parent was watching over them, and keeping their objects. Interestingly, they also observed that the child's relationship with the deceased parent was not static. Instead, it evolved and matured as the child grew.

So if our relationships with our deceased family and friends evolve, then our grief must evolve as well. Not only do we grieve them at the time of the death, but we also grieve them in the future when we enter new life stages, hit milestones, and understand new realities. Although we may have made peace with certain pieces of our grief in the past, in time we discover sadness over losses we hadn't even known existed.

We imagine in our 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's and beyond how our relationship theoretically might have been and we grieve for our inability to hear, touch, see, and talk to the person they would have become. When nurturing relationships with those who have died, we hold onto objects, we search for reminders, we talk about them, and we look for clues to tell us who they were and who they would be today.

Holding onto someone after death was at one point, considered unhealthy grief. Remnants of this mindset can still be found today in attitudes and expectations of our society. But when we accept we can have fluid, changing, and long-term relationships with those who have died, we open ourselves up to a new understanding of grief. One which normalizes the experiences of loss, grief and bereavement years after the death. This gives us permission to continuously redefine and grow in our relationship with the person who has died for as long as we live.

(Extracts from <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/relationships-with-the-dead/>)

REFLECTION *I will never leave you*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43Wkd01W8kw>



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*Life is
changed not
ended*



*Sometimes I just
have to stop,
close my eyes and
hug you, even if
it's only in my
mind.*

Unknown

*Death does
not end our
story...
Death does
not end our
relationships*