

Grief, Loss and Insidious Loneliness

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One of the most painful aspects of the grieving process can be loneliness. We expect to be sad, but the feeling of loneliness has its own and subtly different kind of pain. It can be unsettling and scary. What you need to know is that you are not alone in feeling these feelings. They are quite common in women.

I hope that just knowing that will help you to feel a little less lonely.

It makes perfect sense to feel lonely at times. The one who you loved so much and the one who loved you so much is gone. It is an awful feeling. You yearn for him. You want her back. You miss him. You need her. And he is not there. She is not there. It's not fair, it's wrong, and yet it's the truth you are living. This is normal. And natural. It comes with the territory. You will be lonely for the person you lost.

Loneliness is part of your journey.

But there is another kind of loneliness that no one really talks about. I call it "insidious loneliness." Insidious loneliness is the kind of loneliness that makes you feel like you are alone in the world. It's the sensation of walking through your life, within your life and around your life without actually being part of your life. It's the odd experience of seeing people laughing and thinking "How can they be happy? Don't they know that my _____ is gone?"

Other people don't even have to be laughing or smiling for you to experience this confusion. They could just be living their lives. But you're not. You're disconnected from them and disconnected even from your own feeling of being engaged in life.

Insidious loneliness is slowly and subtly harmful and doesn't serve any good purpose...for you, for your grieving process, or for anyone else.

Insidious loneliness occurs because we think (it may or may not be true) that no one really gets how much we are suffering. Most women I know are pleasers – we like making other people happy. While we are grieving, we sometimes look and act like we're fine. We do this without trying or sometimes we know we're hurting and we put on the happy face. Some may even comment about how well we're handling our loss. We may even smile and agree, but inside we know the truth. It hurts and it's awful. We do this for a few reasons....see if any of these sound familiar:

"I don't want to bring anybody down."

"I don't want to talk about this grief stuff again."

“So and so can’t handle my pain.”

“They think I’m fine, why burden them.”

“They don’t want me to mention _____’s name.”

“I need to be strong for my family.”

“Nobody wants to hear about this anymore.”

“It’s _____ (insert holiday/family get-together or supposed to be fun activity) and it’s not right to be sad.”

“I simply don’t have time for being so sad!”

“So and so is handling this so well and I’m a mess. I need to buck up.”

“If I talk about it, they’ll want to fix it or say well meaning, but very stupid things that don’t help.”

“_____” (that’s for your own reason that I didn’t list)

The thing that seems to help the most with insidious loneliness is telling your truth to someone. I’m talking about the real truth about what is actually going on with your grieving process.

Find one fabulous, kind, loving, nonjudgmental, smart, understanding person and tell that person your truth. Find someone who knows you and who accepts you for the wonderful person that you are. Tell them how lonely you feel. Tell them how disconnected you feel. Tell them how lost you feel.

Don’t assume they already know. Chances are, you’re probably doing a good job hiding it.

If you don’t feel like there is anyone else in your life that you can safely tell these things to, or if you don’t want to burden them, then think about finding a professional grief counselor. Most of them understand the loneliness you are feeling and can help you work through it.

Having at least one person on the planet that knows – that really knows – what you’re going through can relieve you of your insidious loneliness.