



Sorrow, Lament, & Grief

Grief is no stranger to those of us affected by chronic illness, mental illness, chronic pain, and disability. While there are no specific rules for grieving chronic loss, there *is* a road map and there are fellow travelers on this unavoidable, uniquely individual, and universally-shared human experience. Yet grief is also a precursor of hope and the catalyst for growth.

"Chronic sorrow is heavy," writes Andrea Foster. "It shows up boldly and uninvited ... Circumstances vary, but the moments of inexplicable grief that suddenly grip us are a common bond."

THE CYCLE OF CHRONIC SORROW

- Loss and grief are a difficult, yet normal part of life.
- As familiar patterns emerge, we're reminded that we've navigated this cycle before and survived.
- Rest is sometimes the most beneficial thing we can do.
- Call, text, or handwrite a #PenToPaper note to a loved one.

LAMENT IS A LANGUAGE OF PRAYER

Lament is a song of sorrow and a language of prayer. In grief, we often just want someone to listen to our story with compassion. The word *compassion* is derived from two Latin roots, *com* and *pati*, meaning *with* and *suffer*, so the literal translation means *to suffer with*.

POETRY OF GRIEF

Grief is a holy madness.

It is not a puzzle to be solved,
a problem to be overcome,
or a situation to be managed.

It is wilderness we wander in search of the sacred ...

Patricia McKernon Runkle

Visit chronic-joy.org for more resources.



GRIEF IS AS UNIQUE AS A FINGERPRINT

David Kessler wrote, "Each person's grief is as unique as their fingerprints. But what everyone has in common is ... the need for someone to be fully present to the magnitude of their loss without trying to point out the silver lining."

CHRONIC SORROW & DISENFRANCHISED GRIEF

Loss is an unavoidable facet of illness, pain, and disability. "The term *chronic sorrow*, has been used to describe the long-term periodic sadness the chronically ill and their caregivers experience in reaction to continual losses," according to the National Library of Medicine.

Ken Doka calls this *disenfranchised grief* - the unacknowledged, invalidated, minimized, or misunderstood grief that others avoid talking about, offer cliches that minimize our grief, or make statements pointing out the silver lining.

PERMISSION TO GRIEVE

"Perhaps the most important thing I learned after falling ill was that allowing myself to grieve was key. I had to give myself time and space to feel all the complex emotions that come with grief and loss of health. There was no rushing myself to feel better. I learned to give myself permission to cry and that it was okay to have days where I felt like I couldn't go on anymore. Sometimes I just needed to feel that despair before I could process it and move past it," wrote Rachel Tait.

HOPE IN LAMENT

"Lament allows us to fully face and name our pain, and it creates space for future resolution and hope *without glossing over our trauma*. It gives us permission to protest life's difficulties, to scream, cry, vent, plead, and ... lets us ask the hard questions without condemnation: "Why did this have to happen?" "How could You allow this?" "Where are You in the midst of this?" It allows weeping without explanation. It might be messy and uncomfortable, but it's the first step towards healing," says Whitney Wollard

"Grief confronts what we have believed since we were children and forces us to look at our faith in new ways."

Rev. Wendy Fenn

chronic-joy.org/midst-of-grief

