

GRIEF & MEDICATION

Perhaps you've heard the expression, "The only way out is through." The only way out of grief is to go through the pain and let the natural process work. Only then will you find the light at the other end of the dark tunnel.

Our natural body requires externalization of emotional pain before we can heal.

In a day of pharmacology, people are denied the opportunity to work through their pain by externalizing their feelings. Medication may offer temporary cessation of the pain, and robs those around the mourner the experience of witnessing someone grieving. The mourner is able to mask his or her feelings and look okay to the outside world. But where do the emotions and feelings go?

They remain unprocessed in the mind, body, and soul.

When the medication stops, grief emotions will again surface in their natural effort to be expressed.

Many will again attempt to shut off the pain with drugs instead of naturally externalizing it, and thus become addicted in a similar manner to those addicted to alcohol, tobacco, cocaine and other chemical substances.

So, what's wrong with taking away the pain?

There is nothing wrong with removing pain as long as it doesn't set you up for more pain and trauma in the future.

Unless the natural feelings and emotions of grief are somehow expressed—gotten out of the system—they remain inside, perhaps masked or disguised by the drug.

Is it ever appropriate to take drugs?

Yes, when prescribed by a competent clinician who has training and experience with the grieving process, and will continue to follow the patient during the grieving process.

It is not appropriate when prescribed by a well-meaning professional who is only concerned with the cessation of immediate symptoms and will have no responsibility for continually working with the patient during the grieving process.

It is never appropriate for medication or drugs to be administered by family or friends.

Even when their motivation is the griever's emotional stability, all too often they have a hidden motivation to make that person more comfortable to be around.

The only way out of the pain is to go through it, to fully experience it.

Only then can we reconcile it within our heart and learn to move forward.

This will require lots of support to guide us through the rough spots, but the end result will be reconciliation—a working through of the grief—instead of a lifetime of drug-assisted avoidance.