

SOCIETAL MYTHS ABOUT LOSS

Death and grief have been around since the beginning of mankind, and yet grief remains a taboo topic in many societies. This lack of understanding can lead many mourners to feel as though s/he is a square peg in a round world, no longer fitting in. Because grief can also be stigmatizing, mourners hesitate to educate family and friends with facts. Following are common myths that have a stronghold.

MYTH: Grief ends after one year.

FACT: The bereavement timeline is unique to every individual, and many grieve in subtle ways for the rest of their life. Accepting a societal timeline can lead to disappointment.

MYTH: People who mourn for more than a year are just looking for sympathy.

FACT: Crying is a healthy response to emotional pain. Suppressed grief leads to complications. It's critically important that mourners be allowed to cry as part of the process for as long as they need.

MYTH: Time heals all wounds.

FACT: While the rawness of loss can soften with time, the rate at which we reconcile our loss largely depends upon the grief work we do along the way. If we ignore the wound, it remains unchanged.

MYTH: Grief is just an emotional response.

FACT: Experiencing a first-degree loss affects far more than just our emotions. It can affect many facets of our life, including our behavioral, cognitive, emotional, physical, and spiritual self.

MYTH: Women grieve more than men.

FACT: While the male and female brains are wired differently, males grieve just as deeply as

females, though they tend to externalize it through physical reactions instead of emotional reactions.

MYTH: There are 5 grief stages.

FACT: In 1969, Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross theorized five stages of grief that terminal patients facing death often go through. Loved ones left behind can experience many stages, and the timeline isn't linear.

MYTH: Grief and mourning are the same thing.

FACT: Grief is our response to losing a loved one. Mourning is how a person expresses their grief, such as choosing to wear black clothing or getting a memorial tattoo.

MYTH: Lack of tears means a mourner has moved on and is okay.

FACT: Crying is one way we express sorrow. Mourners react and express grief in many ways.

MYTH: The first year of grief is the hardest.

FACT: Many mourners find the second year of grief to be harder than the first. This is due in large part to the numbness wearing off and the reality settling in. Some find that grief eventually eases as the rawness softens.