

Published November 24th, 2021

Good grief

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support group or someone to talk this through is one of the best treatments for grief. Just being validated for your feelings, whatever they are, can be comforting.

All of us know that with time, grief becomes less painful. Your memories of the family member take over and give you pause for a smile or a laugh. This does not mean that there is a little part of your heart that is missing. It just means you have gotten to "acceptance," not "forgetfulness." Love endures.

This column is about good grief and that means going through the process, even if you thought you were ready and you are comforted that your family member is no longer in pain and in a better place that many of us call heaven. You can still get stuck in the grief process. I am going to call the stuck place "bad grief."

When you get stuck in any of those places that Elizabeth Kubler-Roth wrote about, reach out to a pastor, friend, therapist or support group. You want to honor your lost family member or friend, so do an act of kindness in their name. Let them live on through your acts of kindness and love.

It is the month of Thanksgiving, begin each day with what you are grateful for in life and end each day with something you found to be grateful for in that day. This small act also helps with the grief process.

One of the issues during the grief process can be sleeplessness and trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Next month on Dec. 10 at 11 a.m. I will be doing my Zoom class on "The Elusive Thing Called Sleep."

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When you fight hard, you seek out every possible resource and engage a great team. But then your family member dies and you feel you didn't do all you could. We end up feeling guilty, even knowing that this is part of the process and it can hit us hard.

I lost two of my younger brothers in the past five months; I have every resource at my disposal and years and years of helping families find answers to challenging situations, but still all my advice to my sisters-in-law did not change the trajectory of their illnesses. I feel sad, I miss them, I feel empathy toward my wonderful sisters-in-law, but there is this pang of guilt that I should have done something else.

Now my rational brain, the trained therapist, comes in with: "Well this is just part of grief." Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross wrote a book on the grief process many years ago. In the book she goes into detail about the process of grief being: denial, bargaining, guilt, depression and acceptance. Again my rational brain says that is all fine, but I still feel like I should have done more or had an answer that none of the many physicians and stellar medical facilities could come up with.

It's easy to see how?guilt can lead to depression, but we just can't stop the process of life that includes death. In my circle of friends and family I realize that I am not alone. A friend recently lost a dad to Alzheimer's disease. She is an expert in that field and could not make a difference on his final days. I have another friend who is a retired medical professional struggling to find answers for a family member with severe mental illness.?

For those of you not trained in mental or medical health, it is just as hard. Getting out of these stuck places in the grief journey really takes a mini-village of sorts. A

