

Ignoring Grief

"IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME IF I JUST KEEP MYSELF BUSY."

This is a common phrase we as Grief Counselors here when we ask about how someone is coping with their grief.

Many people share that grief can feel so overwhelming, that they have to stay busy so it doesn't feel so all-consuming. This idea of keeping ourselves busy to help us cope with grief is legitimate, in moderation.

We all have our own unique reasons for trying to stay busy and trying to ignore grief to some degree. Some common general themes are:

- Fear over letting grief "take over"
- Concern that they won't be able to cope with facing the reality of grief
- Worry of the feeling of drowning in tears or other strong emotions
- Feeling the pain of grief to be overwhelming
- Avoiding the discomfort and uncertainty of this new experience

... with many more.

Our brains (and hearts) need to take the hard and heavy realities of grief at our own pace, so this will look different for everyone.



But the really hard reality is that if we don't take the time to see, acknowledge, and express our grief, it doesn't just go away. Many times we may find that it does the exact opposite!

We may see our emotions, thoughts, or experiences flare up almost as if we were having what felt like a huge wave of grief, or some even liken it to a temper tantrum as they may see in a toddler. Our grief *needs* outlets to be expressed.



As long as we are acknowledging things, let's take a moment to acknowledge that taking time to face and feel your grief is not a simple task, but it is such an important one.

When we take time to grieve, we are helping to process what happened, give compassion and empathy to our experience, and help ourselves learn how we need to cope with these new feelings and help ourselves to survive. I hope there will also be outlets to help find support and understanding from others around you.

Please know that not everyone knows how to support someone in their grief, but there are people out there who are willing and wanting to connect and support each other through this tough journey.

Here's another great thing about doing the hard work of paying attention to our grief - the more we give to our grief, the more readily we are able to cope and support ourselves through it. Some even mention that their waves of grief feel smaller because they are no longer ignoring or bottling it up.

So how do we figure out what "ignoring" grief looks like in moderation - as we mentioned before. I really like the idea of breaking things down into taking time to grieve and taking time to live. While grief doesn't always work on our schedule or allow us to tell it when we are ready, I ask you to think about the following things:

If I need to express myself, am I in a safe space to do so? Do I have someone who can support me or do I need some time to do this by myself?

Making sure we don't always push it off, taking time for it when it's safe to do so can be a helpful first step.

Am I feeling "stuck" in my grief right now? If so, does it feel ok to take an intentional break and focus on life for a while?

It can be scary to think about not being able to get out of the "grief hole," so it can be helpful to take mindful steps to help ourselves find ways to take a break from grief for a while.

Remember, you are the only one who knows exactly what's right for you.