

An Open Letter to Grief

Category: Palliative and Hospice Care

written by Molly Kaylyn Svendsen | December 4, 2024

Dear Grief ~

When we met, you were an unwanted and unwelcome visitor. The kind that makes their-self at home without invitation and bears a stubborn resolve to never leave. Sometimes ignorable, usually not.

And since that time, though I have tried to shield those around me from your agony, I've watched as you've met many friends, family and patients. You have appeared through sorrow, through anger, through hyper-productivity and through helpless despair. And in this I have begun to realize the beautiful complexity of your presence.

Despite Kubler-Ross' succinct stages of grief, you are frustratingly and unpredictably non-linear. A messy chaotic reality vacillating between utter despair and complete denial. You show up in the quiet hours of the early morning, in the coffee shop line and in the middle of a work meeting. Always inconvenient, never excusable.

Yet you are also an opportunity. For with you, you bring a slowing of time. An urgency to take stock of all that can-and will-be lost. You bring the painful reality that every day, each of us lucky enough to be alive are face-to-face with this fragile and thin veil between one life and the next. This truth bringing with it a resolve to live more fully and to love more fiercely.

Incredibly, you usually do feel the most like love. In the same way Heidi Priebe describes you as a giant neon sign loudly proclaiming "love was here." I feel you more importantly in the finer print that "love still is."

You have become the continuation of a love that lacked comprehension of its own power and depth. You've shown me that to love others even though I will someday lose them is the sacred work of this life and that to continue loving those lost gives life meaning.

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