

225. Grief



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With Your Host

Jody Moore

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I'm Jody Moore and this is *Better Than Happy*, episode 225, Grief.

This podcast is for people who know that living an extraordinary life is not easy or comfortable. It's so much better than that. This is *Better Than Happy*, and I'm your host, Jody Moore.

What's happening, everyone. Welcome to the podcast. It is podcast time, one of my most favorite times of the week, when I get to sit down and talk with you all. Thanks so much for listening, thanks for sharing, thanks for your reviews.

I was just reading through some reviews the other day. I haven't looked at them in a little while and I was like, "Why do I not read these every day?" You guys are so lovely and kind. I cannot thank you enough, not only for the kind words you say, but for taking the time to leave a review, because that's what tells iTunes, "Hey, people like this, we should share it with more people." So, thank you, thank you for all of it.

I just got done coaching my VIPs in Be Bold. Once you've been in there six months, you're a VIP, you get to come to VIP coaching calls. And I'm so in awe that I get to do this for a living. I feel like I'm living a dream. I always sort of thought that a job was something that you did because you need to, to make money.

And the truth is, I always have enjoyed working, but I never, in my wildest dreams, imagined that I could do something that I love this much, that I genuinely would do for free because I love it so much. Like, when the finance planners say, "When are you going to retire?" I always say, "Never." I never want to retire. Why would I want to retire? This is what I love doing.

So anyway, thank you for being here. We're going to talk about grief today. This is one of the topics on my list of requests that you guys have sent in for podcast topics. I had lots of requests to talk about grief.

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And I want to approach this in a way that honors that life is challenging. I don't want anyone to hear me say, for a minute, that I'm trying to take away from the challenge that life is. I believe that it is challenging. I believe that there are all kinds of experiences that we have in this life, many of which are completely outside of our control, many of which just happen to us for no apparent reason that are super overwhelming and challenging to deal with.

And I am not a believer that you should be handling it better. I really don't think that. I don't think that you should be doing it any differently than you're doing it.

So the reason I was sort of hesitant to talk about this topic – or I should say not hesitant, but the reason I hadn't really thought to do it before is because I don't believe there is a right or wrong way to grieve and to go through struggle and to suffer as we do in this human experience. So that's the first thing.

The second thing is that grief is – I kind of classify it as an emotion, but I think it's also an experience that makes up many different emotions. We have, in traditional psychology, the five stages of grief that were outlined many years ago that are often used in traditional therapy and counseling. It's a word I use a lot in coaching as well, but sort of to help somebody identify what the experience is that they're going through and to make peace with the experience itself.

So I want to take just a minute and talk about the five stages of grief, but then I'm going to share with you what my experience has been as I've coached people in grief. And I'm going to give you some tools that I think can make it more tolerable and make it even a more peaceful, somewhat spiritual experience.

So again, that's not to say that if you're not experiencing it that way, if it doesn't feel peaceful and it doesn't feel spiritual to you and you kind of want to say, "Hey, Jody, you don't know what this is like," I'm right there with you. And I think that you have to be open to allowing yourself to go

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through the experience in whatever way you choose to navigate it, okay. So again, some of these tools I'm going to give you, I hope, will equip you with just options and different ways to move through it.

So, let's talk first of all about the five stages of grief. Okay, now, I don't know if this was me misunderstanding the five stages or if sort of the world of academics who have defined it in this way have sort of changed their view, but I used to believe anyway that the way we talked about grief was that you go through these five stages and it's sort of a process and you go through them maybe in different orders. But once you've moved through the five stages, then you're kind of going to be through grieving.

I don't think that's the case anymore. Again, maybe that was never the message. But I think the truth is that you'll go in and out of these stages, some of them maybe very quickly, some of them maybe you spend longer in, and you might come back to some of them. And I don't think there is a set amount of time that is appropriate to grieve.

I think some people might move through them more quickly, and others, it might take much longer. And I don't see any upside to telling yourself, "I should be over this by now. I should be moving through this faster."

So, what I love about these tools that the world of psychology has given us is it allows us to be compassionate and sort of understand what's going on in our heads, but what I don't want you to do is use it against yourself and start Googling, "How long is an appropriate time to grieve after something like this happens." I just don't see any upside to that.

If you can be patient and allow yourself the experience, I find that to be much more useful for my clients. Okay, so, back to the five stages. The first stage that is defined is denial. Denial is the first stage. It's sort of that rejection and resistance of what is.

So, I have many clients who are in denial about a lot of things. And denial doesn't have to be an outright not acknowledging what's happening. I think,

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again, denial can be just that resistance of, no, this shouldn't be happening, this something's gone wrong and I'm not willing to accept this.

Sometimes it's a desire to control things that are uncontrollable, all of that sort of fits in the denial category. So denial, totally normal natural thing to go through when you're grieving.

Now, I want to make sure that we understand also – I should back up here and say also that grief can be appropriate and it can be what I call clean pain, in other words, useful sort of pain that will help you move through and experience and help you heal through that experience and even become stronger and different and more refined as a result of that experience.

But it doesn't just have to be about the death of a loved one, for example. It may be the death of a loved one, certainly that's an appropriate time for grief. But there are a lot of other situations where grief is appropriate. I think it's a, "Death" of most anything that you expected in your life.

It may be that you're grieving that your mother is actually never going to become the kind of mother that you wanted her to be and hoped that she would be. Maybe you're grieving your relationship with your spouse in some way. And this could mean that your marriage has ended, or not. It might be recognizing that the marriage is never going to be the way you thought it was going to be and you might still choose to stay in that marriage but choose to grieve what you thought it was going to be.

I have a lot of clients who are going through grief about a situation with one of their children, something that their children are going through or a choice that they've made or just an experience that is happening to them. All of these things are sometimes appropriate reasons to grieve, to move through the stages of, "Hey, this isn't how I thought things were going to go and my brain doesn't like it and I need to grieve it before I can start to move on and decide how I want to think about it."

Okay, so we talked about denial, that's the first stage. Let's talk about anger. Anger is a really interesting one because, again, according to the

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world of psychology, it is a part of the grieving process. Anger is an emotion that is full of energy. It feels urgent. It feels like something we need to answer or project out in some way.

And I always teach that anger is a secondary emotion, meaning it came from something like hurt or disappointment, which we can certainly see that pretty easily in the grieving process. But sometimes, when I teach my clients that it's a secondary emotion, they think I'm saying you shouldn't feel it. And I'm not saying that.

I do think that it's an option to stay in the primary emotion and it's pretty peaceful when you can. It's a lot easier to deal with disappointment or hurt than it is to deal with anger. But that said, there's nothing wrong with feeling angry either.

You can feel angry and not act out on it, did you know this? We're going to come back to this in just a moment, but anger is definitely one of the common stages of grief.

Okay, the third stage that's defined by psychology is bargaining. Now, bargaining is sort of an interesting one, because who are we bargaining with? Now, in some situations, it's obvious. Sometimes you're bargaining with a spouse, if your spouse is involved in the situation. Maybe you don't want your spouse to leave or whatever it is, maybe it's with a child, maybe it's with other people if there are people involved. But many times, we begin bargaining even when there's not a person involved. It's sort of this bargaining with God.

It's this pleading with Heavenly Father to change circumstances. And again, I think we do this more than we realize. I know I do it more than I used to realize. I'm starting to pay attention now to how I'm asking Heavenly Father to change things that are probably not mine to choose to change.

And again, I don't think there's anything wrong with doing it. I'm not saying you're doing it wrong. But just notice, this may be just one of the stages of

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grief. It's a normal thing for my brain to go through, unfortunately I've found that it often doesn't work.

Okay, let's talk about the fourth stage of grief, which is depression. So, again, depression, I do also believe, is a secondary emotion. I'm going to talk about resisting emotions in a minute, but I believe it comes from resisting all of the other emotions created, from not allowing them. It's a sadness, but it's an intense sadness. It's sort of a fog, if you will, a wondering of what's going on, an inability to access what you're really thinking, a lack of motivation, a lack of energy. It's sort of a darkness that can be really all-encompassing, depression.

Okay, and then the fifth stage is acceptance. So you can see why it feels like we would move through these in order. First, we would be in denial and then we would be angry and then we would bargain, then we'd get depressed, and then we would finally accept. But again, they don't always go in this order. So acceptance – I love this idea though that this is one of the stages of grief because it's the sort of relaxing into what is, embracing what is, making peace with what is.

I'm always coaching my clients, what if you didn't not want it? Which is a double negative and we don't really use those in the English language, except in this case because I don't think you have to get all the way to, "I want it to be this way, I want this thing to happen."

You don't have to want it, but what if you just didn't not want it? That is the way I think about acceptance, is I'm not going to focus on trying to resist it and push it away and talk people out of it because it just is what it is, so now what? Sort of like a Taylor Swift song that says, "I forgot that you existed."

She's like, "I don't hate you; I just don't think about you anymore." It's just indifference. And again, not that you're going to be indifferent about this particular subject, but your brain stops spinning on it in resistance and bargaining and anger and all the other things that you've been spinning on for so long.

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Okay, so those are the traditional five stages of grief. I'm sure this is not new to anybody, but I wanted to just review them quickly.

Now, I had somebody recently – again, I had this on my list, to talk about grief. And then somebody just recently messaged me with her scenario and all the things going on and she's suffered a terrible loss in her life and knows other people who have as well, and she asked me to do a podcast on grief.

And I said, "Yeah, I'm actually getting ready to, but here's what I want to know; if I were coaching you and you told me about this terrible tragedy that you've suffered and the way you're feeling and how just all-encompassing and overwhelming grief feels, I get that, but I want to know, what's your question for me?"

And the reason I always ask my clients that is because I'm curious, is my client thinking, "This isn't fair, I shouldn't be experiencing this." Do they think that something's gone wrong? Because, if so, that's kind of interesting, right?

We can play with the idea that I'm going to grieve, and then I can be upset that I'm grieving, or I can make peace with this is the 50-50 of life, and while I don't enjoy it and I don't want it and it's overwhelming right now and I have all these emotions, nothing has gone wrong in the end. And grief and sadness and struggle and pain are a part of the human process.

Now, that's not how she answered my question. She said to me, "I just want to know, what is the best way to grieve? How do we do it appropriately?" Which is why, again, I want to remind you that I don't think there is an appropriate way. I think it's such a personal experience and I think that giving yourself the permission and the space to move through it at your own timing and in your own way is so important. Let's not be in a rush to get through it, to get to the end.

Now, again, some of you are thinking, "That's easy for you to say, Jody, you haven't gone through what I'm going through right now." And I get that.

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But I have to come back to processing and allowing emotion. Because, with the majority of my clients who are in grief and who are in a lot of pain, and I have some who have been grieving for a long time who come to me and say, “When is this going to end, how do I get over it?” And I tell them, listen, the reason that it’s not ending is because you want it to end.

The reason you’re not moving past it is because you so desperately want to move past it because that’s always a sign of resisting emotion. The way through grief, just like any other feeling, is to relax into it and allow it and get in your body and feel it. And maybe that means going for a drive every day and crying and getting mad, whatever it means for you.

It might mean that you’re less patient with the people in your life. It might mean that you’re grumpier and harder to be around. It might mean that you don’t fix dinners, your kids eat cereal every night. It might mean that you’re not showing up in the way that you normally do and the way that you want to in the future.

What if you make peace with all of that? What if you make peace with, I just need to get through today? Maybe I just need to get through breakfast. We shorten that lens, like I’ve talked about before. So, making peace with the emotions you’re experiencing and allowing them and relaxing into them, I’m telling you, you guys, is life-changing.

I’ve had clients in grief tell me, I if do that, it will become so intense I don’t know what will happen. And I tell them, no, it really doesn’t. I challenge you to try it out. I challenge you to relax into the emotions.

Now, I coached somebody recently at Better Than Happy Live who was going through grief over losing some brothers to suicide. And she talked about how she’s trying to grieve, so she’s sort of not herself. And then her husband struggles with it. He’s struggling with her not being herself.

And what I said to her is, what if we decided to give your husband the same compassion and understanding and sort of approval to struggle that we’re giving you? What if we decided that you’re grieving in this way and he’s

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grieving his wife being different even in his way. And we all just own our own emotions, our own experience, and we be compassionate and curious and accepting and loving of everybody.

Now, I know that's easier said than done. So it takes some examining of your thoughts. It takes some conscious decisions about how you're going to feel and think about the people around you and about yourself, but I'm telling you, it will serve you best in the end to choose that.

So, how do you grieve in the best way? Whatever way you choose, whatever timeline you choose. Seriously, you guys, when I decided I'm not going to put timelines on things, I'm not going to put timelines on when I achieve my goals – I should say I give myself a timeline so I have a target to shoot for, but if it doesn't happen in that time, I don't make it mean that I've failed. I make it mean, oh, it's going to take longer than I thought it was going to take.

And ironically enough, from that thought process, I almost always hit my goals in the timeline. And I want you to think about this with grief as well. If you didn't put a timeline on it, if you didn't try to wrap it in a box and decide it's going to look a certain way and it's going to end in a certain time and it's going to go in a certain process and you opened up to this is exactly how it's supposed to be, my guess is you would actually even move through it faster.

Okay, so relax into the grief, relax into all of the emotions that it includes. There is no emotion that you can't handle, my friend. There is no emotion that your body doesn't know what to do with. Emotions are just created by chemicals and hormones that are released by your organs when two neurons in your brain fire together, which is what I call a thought.

Your body releases the appropriate chemical and your body knows what to do with that chemical. You don't have to react to it. You don't have to get out of fit. You don't have to push it away and tighten against it. You can feel it, even if it doesn't feel good. It's not intolerable. You can handle this, my friend.

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Now, lastly, love. There is so much love around you. The people around you, if you are grieving, the people around you want to help you, but they probably aren't very good at it. They probably don't say the right thing. They probably don't ask about it when you wish they would ask about it and they probably ask about it when you wish they wouldn't and they don't ask it in the right way at all, right?

Decide that these people are coming from love and they don't know any better because the truth is, we're not mind-readers. And you can certainly get advice. There's a lot of advice out there about how to talk to someone who's grieving, and I'm all for that, but you know what I find is, again, one person says, "Don't ask this question," and then another person in the same situation says, "Make sure you ask this question."

So it's really so personal and people can't read our minds. Very sad news, right? So don't be afraid to tell them how they can best support you. If you're going through something and people aren't asking you about it and you want to talk about it, tell them, "I really want to talk about this, would you be willing to listen for a minute? I really want to share this with you."

Can you imagine if someone said that to you? If someone said that to me, I'd be like, please, if a friend or family member or someone shared with me, hey I really want to talk with you about this, would you be willing to listen? Of course, we would, right?

Or if they said, "Hey, listen, when you ask me this question about how I'm doing, I know you mean well, but I really hate answering that question. Would you mind not asking me that anymore?" I'd be like, "Yes, thank you for telling me."

So the people around you mean well, most of them. They are terrible at reading your mind and they may have never been in your situation, so they don't have any idea how to show their love and support. Please tell them. Please direct them. Please make requests of them. But there are people around you who love you.

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And then the last thing I want to give you is, it's been my experience that the most challenging difficult times of my life are when I have felt the spirit strongest. And I'm not saying that's true for everyone. And if that's not true for you, don't use this against yourself. But try on the idea that if you relax into this experience, you allow yourself all the emotions of it, don't tell yourself, "I need to handle this better, I need to be more positive." Relax into the pain of it that that is where the spirit resides. That is where we can feel Heavenly Father's love and we can access the atonement. We can allow Christ to carry us through it.

We have to relax into the pain of it to get to that place. It's a surrender into, "I can't do this alone. I need help from my savior." That is available to you, my friends. I hope that you take advantage of it. Thank you so much for joining me on this episode and I will see you next time. Take care.

If you have a question about something you've heard me talk about on this podcast or anything else going on in your life, I want to invite you to a free public call, Ask Jody Anything. I will teach you the main coaching tool I use with all of my clients and the way to solve any problem in your life, and we will plug in real life examples.

Come to the call and ask me a question anonymously or just listen in. Go to jodymoore.com/askjody and register before you miss it. I'll see you there.