

Thought for the Day: 5-11 April 2021

by a member of the congregation

Monday

Grief and Grieving

Jesus is alive; Love has won the victory over sin and death. Alleluia

Someone once wrote that grief is love with nowhere to go. Alan sometimes uses these words at a memorial or funeral service

So what is grief? Grief comes from the Latin *gravis* meaning heavy. Grief is what we feel after a significant loss. Grieving is a process of adaptation and adjustment after we suffer a loss and we adjust to our new life and our new relationship with the person who has died. Grief and grieving are individual and will last forever. Life will never be the same again after bereavement but the grief and pain should lessen and there will come a time when you are able to adapt and cope with your new life without the person who has died.

The words of Earl Grollman, internationally recognised bereavement counsellor, may be helpful:

"Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve."

And these lyrics: the Rose, written by Amanda McBroom (sung by Bette Midler and others)

Some say love, it is a river
That drowns the tender reed.
Some say love, it is a razor
That leaves your soul to bleed.
Some say love, it is a hunger,
An endless aching need.
I say love, it is a flower,
And you its only seed.

It's the heart afraid of breaking
That never learns to dance.

It's the dream afraid of waking
That never takes the chance.
It's the one who won't be taken,
Who cannot seem to give,
And the soul afraid of dying
That never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely
And the road has been too long,
And you think that love is only
For the lucky and the strong,
Just remember in the winter
Far beneath the bitter snows
Lies the seed that with the sun's love
In the spring becomes the rose.

We shall rest and we shall see and we shall love, we shall love and we shall praise, in the end, which is no end. *St Augustine.*

I am sorry if these thoughts cause you any distress. If you feel you need support then please contact the Clergy, or Cruse Bereavement Care adult helpline: 01707 278389 (answerphone facility from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday - leave a message and one of the bereavement support volunteers will ring you back as soon as possible), or the children and young people's helpline: 01707 264293.



Tuesday

The Nature of Grief

Everyone's grief is different and personal. It is shaped by many things including the nature of the relationship with the person (or thing, because grief can be the response to any significant loss), how they died, our own culture and faith, and our personality.

Grief can impact us everywhere in our daily lives.

In feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, yearning, numbness, shock, jealousy, helplessness, anxiety/fear, relief, and worthlessness.

In our perceptions or thoughts of disbelief, confusion, pre-occupation, hallucinations.

In our behaviours with sleep disturbance, loss of appetite, absent mindedness, dreams/nightmares, searching, crying/sighing, hyperactivity, treasuring objects, avoiding reminders.

In physical sensations such as hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the throat and/or chest, breathlessness, lack of energy, dry mouth, oversensitivity to noise.

These responses are all perfectly normal and are not a sign that we are losing our minds during our grieving. Grief hurts. A lot sometimes.

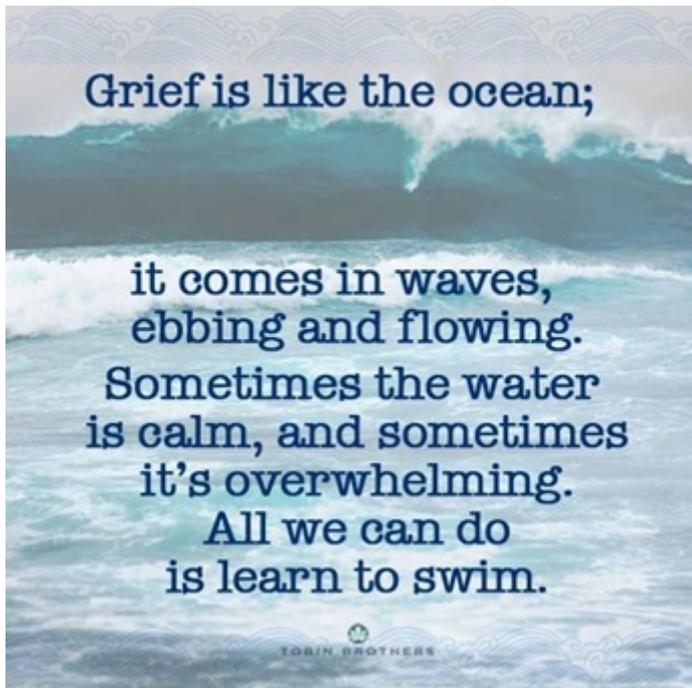
Today's lyrics © James William Somerville and Richard Keith Coles

For a Friend

I never cried the way I cried over you
As I put down the telephone and the world it carried on
Somewhere else, someone else is crying too
Another man has lost a friend, I bet he feels the way I do
And now I'm left without, but you're here within
As I watch the sun go down, watching the world fade away
All the memories of you come rushing back to me
As I watch the sun go down, watching the world fade away
All I want to do is kiss you once goodbye.

Let nothing disturb thee, let nothing dismay thee. All things pass: God never changes, patience attains all that it strives for. He who has God finds he lacks nothing. God alone suffices.

St Teresa of Avila



Wednesday

In my training to become a bereavement support volunteer with Cruse we studied various theories and models of grief. The one which resonated most strongly with me was a model developed by Lois Tonkin. Lois, who died in 2019, was a grief counsellor in Wellington, New Zealand. Some years ago she was concerned that many of her clients' grief did not end the way she thought it should, ie in resolution/acceptance, one of the possible 'stages of grief' suggested by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and others.

Lois attended an Elisabeth Kübler-Ross workshop where an unknown woman described a model of grief which fitted her experience. Lois developed this model to become her Growing Around Grief. The woman's child had died some years before. At that time she said grief consumed her filling every part of her life. She drew a picture to represent her life

(Figure 1) shaded to indicate her grief. She had imagined that over time her grief would shrink and become neatly encapsulated in her life as in Figure 2. But what did happen was different. The grief stayed just as big but her new life grew around it (Figure 3). Sometimes when she was reminded of her child her grief felt just as intense as ever, but increasingly she was able to experience life in the larger circle outside her grief.

What helped me about this model was that it relieved me of feeling that I had to 'get over' my grief. It explains the dark days but also the richness and depth the experience of grief has given to my life. Many of my clients have also found this model helpful to them in their grief.

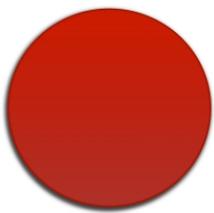


Figure 1

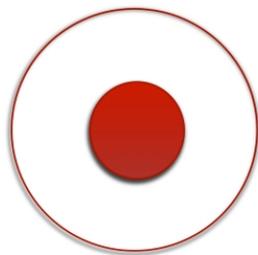


Figure 2

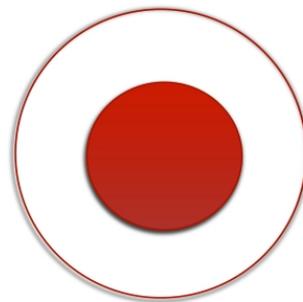
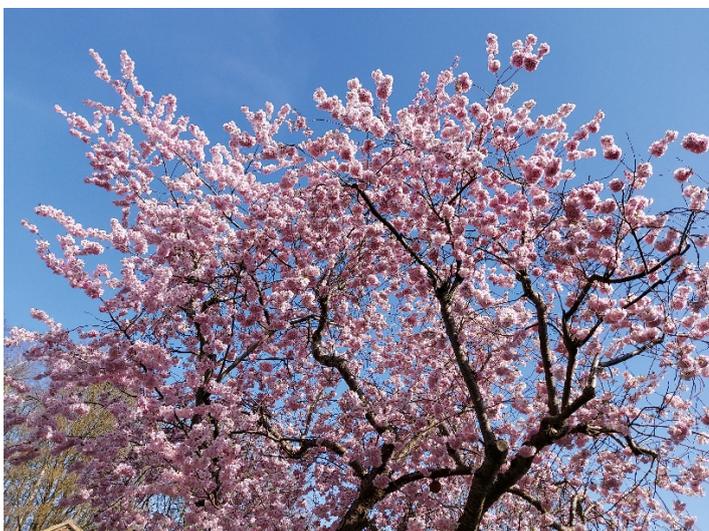


Figure 3

For the lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Revelation 7:17



Thursday

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1926 – 2004) was a Swiss-American psychiatrist, a pioneer in near-death studies, and author of, *On Death and Dying* (1969), where she first discussed her theory of the five stages of grief, also known as the "Kübler-Ross model". The stages are:

Denial – Denial and isolation are described as a temporary defence

Anger – Why me? A stage often difficult to cope with, producing strong emotion

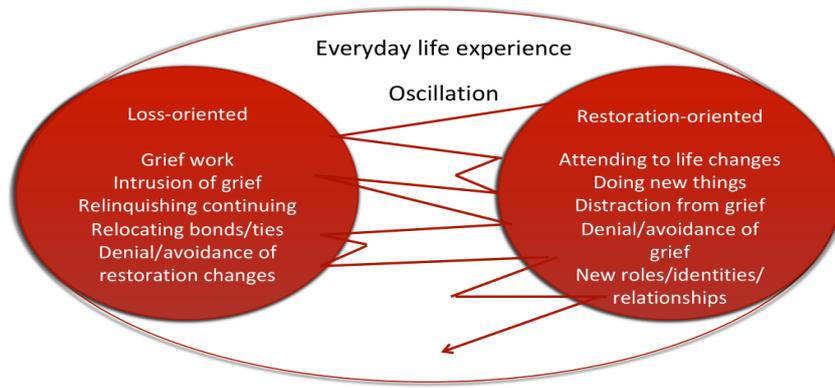
Bargaining – A real attempt to postpone the reality

Depression – Overwhelmed by the great sense of loss

Acceptance – The strong emotions fade, a time of peace and reflection

Kübler-Ross never meant that these stages should be regarded as something every grieving person would or should go through, rather that they might be helpful in describing some of the things that people experience after a significant loss. Neither did she suggest that there would be a linear progression through the stages, but rather we might experience one or more of them at different times. In 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic, David Kessler applied the five stages to responses to the virus, saying: 'It's not a map but it provides some scaffolding for this unknown world.'

There are several other grief theories and models. The Dual Process model was developed by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schutt who wanted to provide a perspective which would be valid if applied to processes of grieving among different cultural and ethnic groups. The main concept of the model is to show the coping process in coming to terms with the loss of a loved one.



The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement
Margaret Stroebe & Henk Schut 1995

The loss orientation concentrates on processing some aspect of the loss experience and is mainly what traditional grief theories focus on. The restoration orientation also brings changes which are secondary consequences of the loss such as learning to do tasks which the deceased used to do, developing a new identity, the 'new normal'. The bereaved person cannot attend to both loss and restoration at the same time, but rather we oscillate between the two. We need to take 'time off' from either coping orientation and pay attention to the other one.

Father of all, by whose mercy and grace your saints remain in everlasting light and peace: we remember with thanksgiving those whom we love but see no longer; and we pray that in them your perfect will may be fulfilled; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ASB 1980



Friday

How to support someone who is grieving

A key skill in supporting is to be able to listen. Most of us say we are good listeners, but do we really listen or is it usually passive listening where we make no attempt to make sense of another person's story, or worse, that we offer solutions or instruct them as to what we think they should do?

To truly listen to someone is one of the most caring acts that we can perform. When we are actively listening we need to be seen to listen and attend to what is being communicated. We respond whilst we concentrate on the story being told to us with verbal prompts such as 'Go on...' 'Can you tell me more....' and non-verbal responses through body language (a bit tricky if you are on line in zoom or talking on the phone!)

LISTENING

You are NOT LISTENING to me when:

You do not care about me

You say you understand before you know me well enough

You have an answer to my problem before I've finished telling you what my problem is

You cut me off before I've finished speaking

You finish my sentences for me

You find me boring and don't tell me

You feel critical of my vocabulary, grammar, or accent

You are dying to tell me something

You tell me about your experience, making mine seem unimportant

You are communicating to someone else in the room, or on your phone

You refuse my thanks by saying you really haven't done anything

You ARE LISTENING to me when:

You come quietly into my private world and let me be

You really try to understand me when I do not make sense.

You grasp my point of view when it goes against your sincere conviction.
You realize the hour I took from you has left you feeling a bit tired and drained.

You didn't tell me the funny story you were just bursting to tell me.
You allowed me the dignity of making my own decisions even though you felt I was wrong.

You didn't take my problem from me but trusted me to deal with it in my own way.

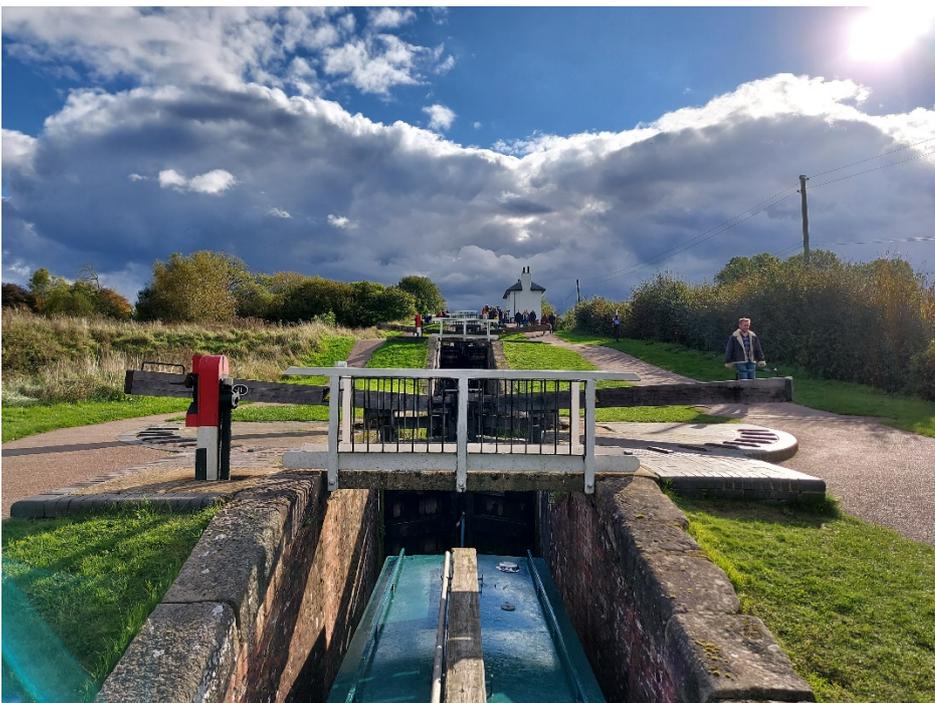
You gave me enough room to discover for myself why I felt upset and enough time to think for myself what was best.

You held back the desire to give me good advice.

You accepted my gift of gratitude by telling me it was good to know I had been helped.

Nature has given us one tongue but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak. Epictetus, Greek philosopher.

The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing, not curing, not healing and face with us the reality of our powerlessness, that is a friend who cares. Henri Nouwen



Saturday

What might we say to someone who is grieving?

In the Gospels we have most interesting accounts of those who met Jesus after the Resurrection. If we read carefully they did not recognise Him as they had known Him physically before, but by the kind of person He was to them. For instance in John chapter 20 verses 10-18 we read of Mary, who was a very close friend to Jesus coming to the tomb, crying. She was confused because He was not where she expected Him to be. As she turned away into the garden she saw someone she did not recognise. When He spoke she thought she was listening to the gardener, until He called her by her name in a way that she knew!

When we meet friends and relatives, or strangers who are grieving, we sometimes worry what to say to them. Should we ask about the person who died? Do we mention the dead person by name or will that upset them. It's a bit like worrying that if we talk to a friend who is very depressed about suicide and ask them if they have thought about ending their life that in some way we might put the idea into their head. In fact you won't give someone suicidal ideas by talking about suicide. Rather, the opposite is true. Talking openly and honestly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can help save a life.

Back to the grieving friend, although the principles below could also help for someone who is suicidal. Be aware of your own worries and fears, but try not to let them stop you supporting your friend or family member. There is a lot you can do to make them feel less alone, more loved and supported.

Don't worry too much about saying exactly the right thing. The feeling will come across and it is more important that you say something than that you find the perfect words.

Be honest. Acknowledge the news by sharing your condolences, saying how sorry you are that their friend or relative has died. Share your thoughts about the person who died (if appropriate), tell your friend or relative how much the person will be missed and that you are thinking of

them. Remind them that you are there for them, as much as you can be. Sending a card, text or email can mean the world.

If you can't think of the right words, here are some things you could try:

I don't know what to say but I am so sorry to hear this news.

I am so sorry for your loss – you are in my thoughts.

I'm so sad to hear this and I'm here if you need to talk.

I am so very sorry to hear this sad news. I cannot imagine how devastated you are.

This is so heartbreaking – I wish I could be there to give you a hug.

It can be helpful to try and ask them to share something about the person they have lost. Give them time to think or cry and then listen to their answer. Listening is the most important aspect of this process. Listen and accept in a non-judgemental way. Try to demonstrate empathy and accept that you cannot make them feel better

They may forget what you said — but they will never forget how you made them feel.

— Carl W. Buehner

Giving people time, a friendly listening ear and maybe offering to pray with them are loving gifts a Christian can offer in this situation.

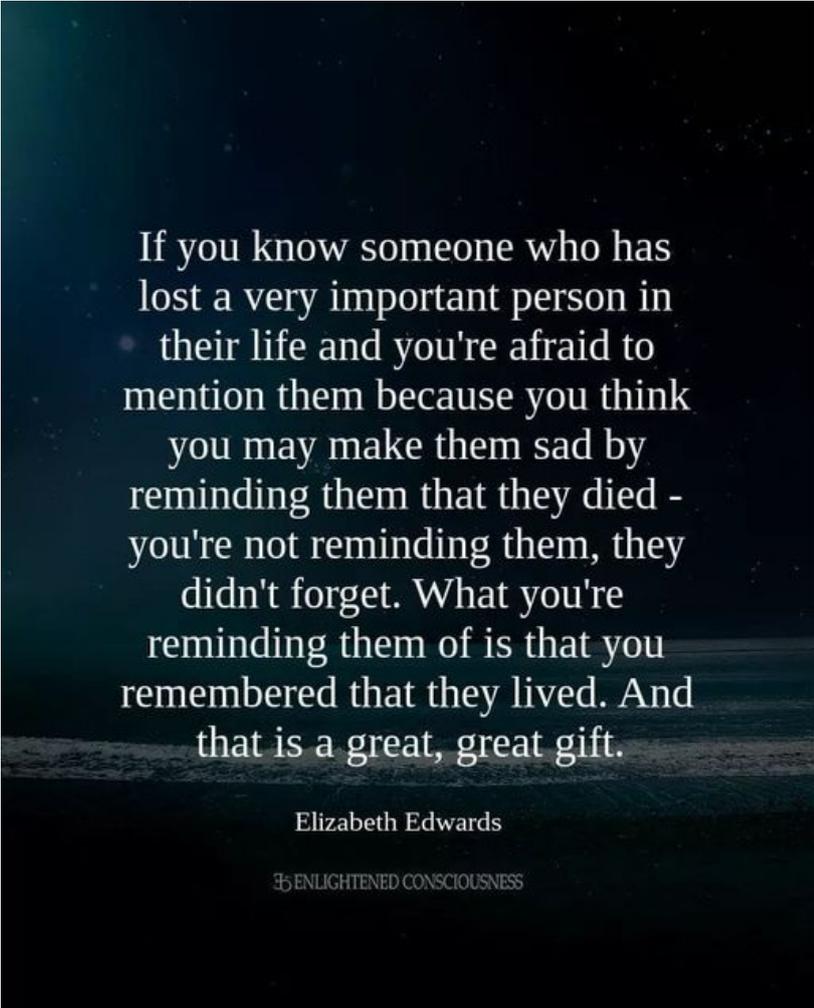
Try not to say:

I know how you must feel, because we can never know what another person is thinking or feeling;

Everything will be ok;

Anything at all which is about you, and not about them!

I am sorry if these thoughts cause you any distress. If you feel you need support then please contact the Clergy, or Cruse Bereavement Care adult helpline: 01707 278389 (answerphone facility from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday - leave a message and one of the bereavement support volunteers will ring you back as soon as possible), or the children and young people's helpline: 01707 264293.



If you know someone who has lost a very important person in their life and you're afraid to mention them because you think you may make them sad by reminding them that they died - you're not reminding them, they didn't forget. What you're reminding them of is that you remembered that they lived. And that is a great, great gift.

Elizabeth Edwards

☯ ENLIGHTENED CONSCIOUSNESS

Sunday

Our faith in the risen Christ is bound to affect the way we live. It will if our hearts and minds are open to receive it.

Self care for those who grieve

We looked at the effects grief can have on Tuesday.

For most of us, bereavement will be one of the most distressing experiences we will ever face.

The grief we feel when someone close to us dies can be overwhelming at times.

Everyone experiences grief differently. There is no "normal" or "right" way to grieve and no time by which you should be 'over' someone's death. Everyone's experience is unique and perhaps you can see how even within your family people can react to the same loss in very different ways.

The feelings you have and what happens to you when you are grieving can feel very unnatural or strange – even scary. Cruse clients often ask us "Am I going mad?" or "Am I doing this right?"

Please be reassured - you are not losing your mind. You are going through the grieving process and it is a journey into the unknown. It does however have a purpose and it will become less overwhelming and easier to cope with as you move through that process. So, as you are dealing with so much, it is important that you take care of yourself following a bereavement:

DO talk to others about the person who has died, about your memories and feelings

DO look after yourself. Eat as well as you can (if you find you don't have an appetite, eat little and often) and get enough rest (even if you can't sleep). Try to get into a "new" routine and include some exercise such as going for a walk. Even a very short walk can help. I found that having a theme for things to look for on a walk helped me – something like blue things, or door styles, or look up at roof lines or chimneys – a good one in Hertford!

DO take up offers of support from family and friends, such as getting dinner made for you, getting shopping or providing a listening ear.

DO give yourself time and permission to grieve.

In John's Gospel we find two very reassuring words often read at funeral services, but not always remembered at the time. Chapter 14 verse 1, Jesus is speaking and says "Trust in God; trust also in me." Trust then is a quality, like belief.

In verse 27 of the same chapter Jesus offers us a gift: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you." It is not like worldly peace, however, but a unique gift that Jesus offers to us all.

God our Comforter

You are our refuge and strength,
a helper close at hand in times of trouble.

Help us so to hear your Word
that our fear may be dispelled,
our loneliness eased,
and our hope reawakened.

May your Holy Spirit lift us above our sorrow
to the peace and light of your constant Love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

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When the world feels like an
emotional roller coaster,
steady yourself with simple rituals.
Do the dishes. Fold the laundry.
Water the plants.
Simplicity attracts wisdom.

