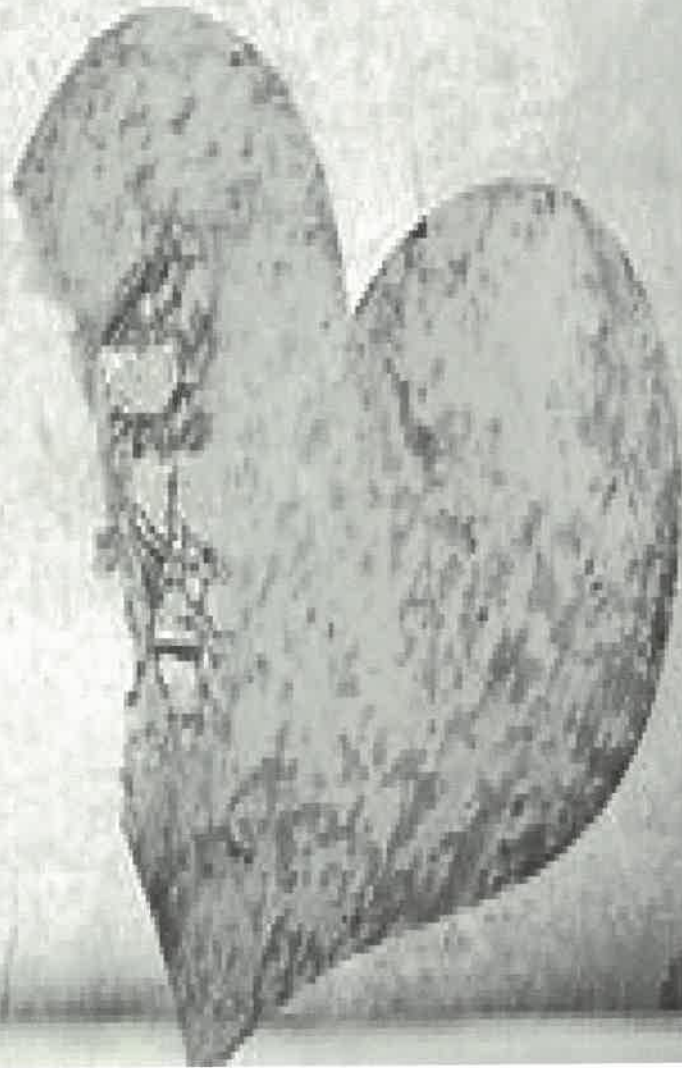


Coping
with
grief.



We have made it through another year. I believe we can all breathe a sigh of relief that 2020 is over! But when you are grieving, although the year may change, the pain of grief stays the same.

In our past sessions we have gone over the different stages of grief.

Denial: You may deny the reality of the loss at some level, in order to avoid the pain. The shock provides emotional protection from being overwhelmed all at once.

Anger: It is common to experience anger after the loss of a loved one. We are trying to adjust to a new reality and we are likely experiencing extreme emotional discomfort. There is so much to process that anger may feel like it allows us an emotional outlet.

Keep in mind that anger does not require us to be very vulnerable. However, it tends to be more socially acceptable than admitting we are scared. Anger allows us to express emotion with less fear of judgment or rejection.

Unfortunately, anger tends to be the first thing we feel when we start to release emotions related to loss. This can leave you feeling isolated in your experience and perceived as unapproachable by others in moments when we could benefit from comfort, connection, and reassurance.

Bargaining: Bargaining can come in a variety of promises including:

- "God, if you can heal this person I will turn my life around."
- "I promise to be better if you will let this person live."

- "I'll never get angry again if you can stop him/her from dying or leaving me."

When bargaining starts to take place, we are often directing our requests to a higher power, or something bigger than we are that may be able to influence a different outcome. There is an acute awareness of our humanness in these moments when we realize there is nothing we can do to influence change or a better end result.

This feeling of helplessness can cause us to react in protest by bargaining, which gives us a perceived sense of control over something that feels so out of control. While bargaining we also tend to focus on our personal faults or regrets. We might look back at our interactions with the person we are losing and note all of the times we felt disconnected or may have caused them pain.

It is common to recall times when we may have said things we did not mean, and wish we could go back and behave differently. We also tend to make the drastic assumption that if things had played out differently, we would not be in such an emotionally painful place in our lives.

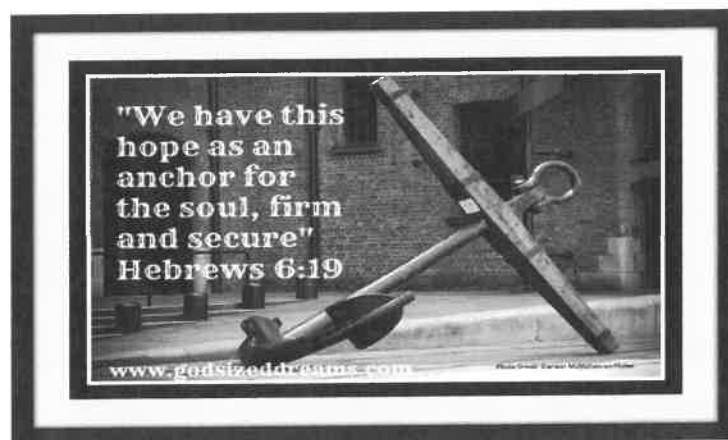
Depression: During our experience of processing grief, there comes a time when our imaginations calm down and we slowly start to look at the reality of our present situation. Bargaining no longer feels like an option and we are faced with what is happening.

We start to feel the loss of our loved one more abundantly. As our panic begins to subside, the emotional fog begins to clear and the loss feels more present and unavoidable.

In those moments, we tend to pull inward as the sadness grows. We might find ourselves retreating, being less sociable, and reaching out less to others about what we are going through. Although this is a very natural stage of grief, dealing with depression after the loss of a loved one can be extremely isolating.

Acceptance: When we come to a place of acceptance, it is not that we no longer feel the pain of loss. However, we are no longer resisting the reality of our situation, and we are not struggling to make it something different.

Sadness and regret can still be present in this phase, but the emotional survival tactics of denial, bargaining, and anger are less likely to be present.





God is our
refuge
strength &
an ever
present help
in trouble.
Psalm 46:1

As I have stated before, there is no order of the grieving process. Some may jump right to acceptance while others ride the waves as if they are on a rollercoaster. The ups and downs of grief can be a never-ending struggle!

So how do you manage? How do you go on day after day without falling into what I call that "Sinking Thinking"? When you have managed to overcome one stage only to sink backwards. Only to emotionally relapse. We have all been there! We are human beings.

Personally, when I find myself going backwards, I run to the only person that can get down in the sand with me...GOD! The bible tells us in Deuteronomy 31 :8, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you." Most have heard that over and over again and I will be one to tell you that this is 100% true! Therapy and Jesus is the only way I have managed to get through these past couple of years. You do not have to bear the burden alone! Seek out people that , along with Jesus, are willing to get in it with you! **HAVING A SUPPORT SYSTEM IS VITAL!** It is ok to not be ok! It is ok to need someone! You are not crazy! You are not supposed to "just get over it"! **GRIEF HURTS** but there is someone that can help carry the load with you and help with the healing process! They don't call Him the **BALM** for nothin! He is our Jehovah Rapa! Our healer! And He will send people in your life to act on His behalf! This ain't what I heard, **IT'S WHAT I KNOW!**

You don't have to "sink"! Let Him be your anchor.



Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift, and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift or firm remain?

It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand;
And the cables, passed from His heart to mine,
Can defy that blast, thro' strength divine.

It will firmly hold in the straits of fear,
When the breakers have told the reef is near;
Tho' the tempest rave and the wild winds blow,
Not an angry wave shall our barque o'erflow.

When our eyes behold thro' the gath'ring night
The city of gold, our harbor bright,
We shall anchor fast by the heav'nly shore,
With the storms all past forevermore.

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