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THE OTHER SIDE OF GRIEF

FINDING LIGHT WHEN THE WEIGHT
WON'T LIFT

INTRODUCTION

Grief is not something you “get over.” It isn’t a straight line, and it doesn’t come with an expiration date. Some days it’s sharp and overwhelming. Other days it’s quieter but still there, lingering in the background. Grief doesn’t vanish; it changes. It softens. It teaches you how to carry it differently.

I learned this when I lost my grandmother, Lena. Her passing shook me in ways I didn’t expect. At first, I thought the pain meant I wasn’t coping well enough. But over time, I realized the weight of grief wasn’t a sign of weakness — it was a reflection of love. The heaviness didn’t mean I was failing; it meant her life mattered to me that deeply.

This guide isn’t about rushing through grief or pretending it disappears. It’s about recognizing that there is another side. The other side of grief isn’t forgetting — it’s remembering in a way that doesn’t break you, but builds you. It’s learning to honor the love without being buried by the loss.

FACING THE SILENCE

The first thing grief brings isn't always tears — sometimes it's silence. The kind of silence that fills a room even when other people are talking. It's the quiet ache that comes when the world keeps moving, but your world has stopped.

In the beginning, this silence feels unbearable. It's not just the absence of the person you lost — it's the absence of their laugh, their voice, the way they moved through the room, the way they were stitched into the everyday rhythm of your life. Without them, the air feels heavy, like the whole world has lost its sound.

When you're grieving, silence doesn't feel neutral — it feels alive, pressing in on you. You may find yourself trying to escape it. Turning on the TV for background noise. Scrolling endlessly through your phone. Filling your calendar so you don't have to sit still. Anything to avoid the echo of what's missing.

I remember when my grandmother passed, the silence in her house was louder than any words could have been. She had always been the center, the voice, the energy. She sang while she cooked. She was always on the phone with someone she loved. She hummed in the background of life itself. Suddenly, all I could hear was absence. Even the sound of her phone not ringing the way it used to was a kind of silence that cut deep.

But here's the truth: silence isn't the enemy. At first, it feels suffocating — but with time, it begins to shift. That same silence that once pressed down on you can become space. Space to breathe. Space to remember. Space to feel without rushing. What was once emptiness can turn into sacred ground — a place where memory lives, where you start to hear your own heart again, and maybe even the whisper of your loved one in the quiet.

The silence won't always hurt the way it does at first. Eventually, you learn to sit in it without panic. You find moments when the quiet feels less like loss and more like presence — as if love itself has changed form. The world doesn't go back to how it was, but silence softens into something bearable, even holy.

THE WEIGHT THAT DOESN'T GO AWAY

People often expect grief to be temporary, like a season you eventually walk out of. Weeks pass, months pass, even years — and yet, the weight is still there. It changes shape, but it doesn't fully leave. And that can make you wonder, Am I doing this wrong? Shouldn't I be "*over it*" by now?

The truth is, grief doesn't vanish because love doesn't vanish. When someone has been woven into the fabric of your life, their absence is felt forever. The heaviness you carry isn't proof that you're broken; it's proof that their presence mattered.

After my grandmother passed, I kept waiting for the day it would stop hurting. I thought maybe if I just gave it enough time, I'd wake up and feel normal again. But the weight never fully disappeared. What shifted was my understanding of it. I began to realize that grief wasn't blocking me from healing — grief *was* the healing. The weight I carried wasn't there to crush me; it was there to remind me of the depth of what I had loved and lost.

The other side of grief is not about losing the weight completely. It's about learning to carry it differently. And maybe you're not there yet. Maybe right now it still feels like a burden you can't set down, heavy on your chest and exhausting to hold. That's okay. That's normal. The shift doesn't happen overnight, and you don't have to force it.

But here's what I can promise: if you give yourself permission to feel instead of rushing to "fix," that same weight begins to transform. Over time, what feels unbearable today can start to feel grounding. The ache becomes a reminder — not of what you lost, but of the love that shaped you. The heaviness becomes a way of carrying your person with you instead of feeling like you've lost them completely.

Grief is not a finish line you cross, and healing is not about erasing what happened. Grief is a companion — one you didn't choose, but one that walks beside you. Some days it's quiet, almost unnoticeable. Other days it presses in close, demanding to be felt. But as you keep walking, something subtle but powerful begins to happen: you realize you're not being crushed anymore. You're being changed.

And if you're not there yet, that's okay. The shift will come. The same weight that now feels impossible to carry will one day become proof of how deeply you've loved — and how deeply you are capable of living still.

TRIGGERS, WAVES, AND UNEXPECTED REMINDERS?

One of the hardest parts of grief is how it sneaks up on you. You can be fine for weeks, maybe even months, and then suddenly it all comes rushing back. A song plays on the radio. A smell drifts through the air. You pass someone in a crowd who looks just like them from behind. And before you even realize it, you're right back in the ache.

These moments can feel cruel. They may make you wonder, *Haven't I come further than this? Why does it feel like I'm back at day one?* But grief doesn't move in straight lines. It tends to rise and fall in waves. Sometimes the waves are small, brushing against you gently. Other times they hit like a storm, pulling you under for a while. Neither wave means you're failing. They both mean you're still connected to what — and who — you loved.

For me, one of the first big waves came on Mother's Day. Just a few weeks after my grandmother passed, the world seemed to be celebrating something I had just lost. Flowers, cards, commercials — all of it pressed on a wound that hadn't even begun to close. I didn't want to celebrate, I didn't want to be around anyone. I just wanted her back. That first Mother's Day without her was terrible. It felt like a reminder of everything I no longer had.

You may find yourself facing days like this, too. A holiday, a birthday, an anniversary — moments that used to bring joy may now feel heavy, even unbearable.

Sometimes it's not even the big dates but the small, ordinary things that catch you off guard. And when the wave hits, it can feel like you're right back where you started.

But here's what's possible: over time, the way you experience those waves can shift. A moment that once felt like a setback may slowly begin to feel like a reminder — not only of loss, but of love. A familiar song, a favorite meal, a place you used to share — these things don't lose their power, but the meaning of that power can change. They may stop being only about pain and start carrying traces of presence.

That shift doesn't erase the ache, but it can open the door to something bigger: permission. Permission to laugh on a day you thought you'd only cry. Permission to create new memories without guilt. Permission to carry your person with you, not only as a wound, but as part of your strength.

The waves may not always feel like punishment. With time, they can begin to feel like proof. Proof that love doesn't disappear just because someone does. Proof that memory can be tender and beautiful, even when it stings. Proof that grief doesn't mark the end of your story — it becomes part of the way love continues to live through you.

CARRYING LOVE FORWARD

At some point in the journey through grief, you may begin to notice a shift: the focus turns from what you lost to what you still carry. The ache doesn't vanish, but it begins to sit alongside something else — love, memory, and even legacy.

Carrying love forward doesn't mean leaving grief behind. It means allowing the person you lost to remain part of your life in new ways. For some, it shows up through traditions — cooking a favorite meal, playing a song they loved, or celebrating their birthday in a small but intentional way. For others, it looks like embodying their qualities — the kindness they showed, the lessons they taught, the strength they modeled.

For me, it's often the little things that bring my grandmother forward into my life now. Her voice still lives in my head when I cook, when I push myself to keep going, when I pause to care for others. At first, those reminders were painful because they highlighted the gap her absence created. But over time, I began to see them differently: not just reminders of what was gone, but evidence of how deeply she is still with me.

You may find your own ways of carrying love forward. It doesn't have to be big or public. It doesn't have to look like what anyone else does. Sometimes it's as simple as telling a story about them to someone new, or quietly whispering their name when you need comfort. These moments don't erase grief, but they can soften it by weaving love into your present instead of keeping it locked in the past.

The other side of grief is not about forgetting — it's about remembering differently. It's about honoring without being crushed. It's about carrying love forward in a way that strengthens you, comforts you, and reminds you that even though someone is gone, what they gave you will always remain.

When you reach this place, memory no longer feels like a trap — it feels like a gift. You begin to see the person you lost not only in the past, but woven into the present. In the way you speak, in the way you love, in the choices you make. The ache may still rise, but alongside it comes gratitude: I had someone worth missing.

Carrying love forward allows you to live with grief, not against it. It gives you permission to keep building your life while still keeping theirs close. And each step you take with that love inside you becomes proof that loss does not erase connection — it transforms it.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: THE OTHER SIDE

Grief may begin in shock and silence, in weight and waves, but it doesn't end there. The other side of grief isn't a place without pain — it's a place where pain and love can exist together. It's where the ache doesn't control you, but it also doesn't have to disappear in order for you to keep living.

The other side of grief looks different for everyone. For some, it's learning to smile again without guilt. For others, it's telling stories out loud instead of keeping them tucked away. It may show up in tiny moments of relief — a laugh that surprises you, a memory that makes you warm instead of sad, a day that feels light when you expected it to feel heavy.

You may not be there yet. And that's okay. Grief moves at its own pace, and so does healing. But the possibility is always present: that what feels unbearable today can soften tomorrow, that what feels like punishment now can someday become proof of love, and that what feels like an ending can slowly reveal itself as a continuation.

The other side of grief is not about erasing the loss. It's about living with it in a way that honors both the love you shared and the life you're still here to live. And while you may carry the ache forever, you may also find that the ache carries you — into deeper compassion, into greater strength, and into a life that still has room for joy, even alongside the sorrow.