



Loss...it's okay to do it your way

Although no one chooses to experience grief and loss, it is a part of living and loving. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to grieve. Many people feel alternately sad, angry, confused and even hopeless before they are able to accept their loss, feel the clouds begin to clear and see blue skies again. *Allowing* the process is the challenge.

Avoidance and pity are not helpful

Whether you're faced with a personal loss or supporting someone else, these two common scenarios tend to be unhelpful:

1. Trying to avoid or minimise the pain and
2. Immersing in the pain (over-sympathising).

Avoiding the pain of loss can manifest as overworking (busy, busy), using substances to numb (alcohol, drugs etc) and minimising the feelings - telling yourself or others, "*It's not so bad*", "*Just get over it*" or "You shouldn't feel this way". Denying how you feel doesn't make the feelings go away.

Immersing in the pain, expressing pity or sympathy, undermines the individual's confidence in their innate ability to heal. "*You poor thing, I don't know how you'll ever get over this...*" or "*You don't deserve this, it's so unfair!*" Expressing pity can lead to increased feelings of helplessness and despair.

Giving permission is helpful

By giving yourself or others **permission to feel** the feelings (sad, angry, confused, etc.) you validate the experience. Permission is given when you acknowledge the situation. "*I can see you're feeling really sad. Would you like to talk?*" or "*It must be really hard at the moment, is there anything I can do?*" There is no judgment or expectation, just permission and an offer of support. It could simply be a willingness to be there and say nothing.

If you believe you need to 'fix' someone or take away their pain, it makes it harder to give them permission to experience their loss. Instead, **validate** their feelings and you'll help them keep things in perspective. Even young children can learn that it's normal to feel sad if they lose a pet, a grandparent passes away or a friend moves on and, when you give them permission to feel the way they do, they develop resilience and learn to show empathy. It's okay for them to do it their way too.

*If an experience of loss has a significant effect on mood, behaviour or sleep patterns for an extended time, please engage a professional to assist.

Bare Hands is run by allied health professionals committed to helping women embrace positive change by providing access to practical education. To find out more give us a call, email us or visit www.barehands.com.au.

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- ✓ Don't force or deny grief; simply allow it
- ✓ LOVE and LOSS are signs of LIFE
- ✓ Empathy and kindness are the key to moving forward

"So it's true, when all is said and done, grief is the price we pay for love."

E.A. Bucchianeri

Encouraging women to develop and enjoy dynamic family relationships is Laurie's special focus. With four children, a clinical practice and as the co-founder of Bare Hands, she understands many of the challenges of modern day families and has spent the last 30 years studying and practising strategies and skills that really make a difference.



Laurie Morrison Co-founder Bare Hands, Mother, B.HSc, Strategic Psychotherapist.

