

Grief and Fear

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Many people tell me they don't talk about their pain or grief because they don't want to be a burden to their family or friends. They won't ask for the help they need for fear that their need will be burdensome.

I know this feeling all too well.

Too often, when loved ones ask us how we are doing, we respond with statements like:

"I'm fine."

"I'm okay."

"I'm hanging in there." (A personal favorite!)

In reality, we are not fine or okay and are fast losing our grip on our will to continue. Truly honest statements might look like:

"I can't stop crying."

"I feel like I've been kicked to pieces."

"I am completely confused and have no idea what to do."

So, why aren't we more honest about our pain and grief? Why do so many of us hide behind brittle masks of false smiles and repeated, "I'm fine" even with our closest loved ones?

I think it's fear.

Fear of being thought of as a burden. Fear that our pain and grief is so huge and overwhelming we will drown others in it with us. Fear that our need is too big and others will grow tired of our neediness and leave us. Fear that others will tell us it's time to "let go" or "find closure." Fear of acknowledging we don't know how to "fix it." Fear that admitting our pain and grief will reveal our weakness.

Fear, plain and simple.

I don't have the answer on how to get rid of fear. I don't think it is necessary to get rid of fear. The fears around asking for support may never completely go away. And we can ask for help in spite of them. However, as with grief, I believe that when we acknowledge and move through our fears, they release us and lose much of their power. But, if the fear seems to be paralyzing and too huge to walk through – try pondering this question a wise friend once posed to me:

"What if by asking someone for help – by allowing them to support you – you are actually giving them a gift?"