

# Getting Through Grief Takes Longer Than Most People Think

By Lou LaGrand

Have you ever had someone tell you, "You should be over it by now?" The "it" meaning, the death of your loved one, a divorce, or even the breakup of a long time friendship, for whatever the reason. Or, perhaps you had someone be more subtle and say something like, "You're letting this thing get the best of you." These and other hurtful comments, after a few weeks of dealing with a major loss, although well-meaning, are not uncommon.

What you (and they) need to understand, if any of these kinds of comments have been directed at you, is that the person speaking has little or no insight into the nature of grief and the mourning that is so essential to healing. Forgive the person. However, allow your grief to follow its natural course, unimpeded by artificial barriers.

Frequently, the agenda of would-be friends and caregivers is pushed onto the mourner. Often, this is due to the fact that those who see the pain and turmoil surrounding the efforts of the bereaved person are extremely uncomfortable. They want to see the mourner return to being his/her old self. And that is the crux of the problem.

The mourner is not going to be his/her old self again, simply because major losses change us. We are not the same people. Usually, we grow from the experience and develop a new perception of the world and our place in it. But what many people in the mourner's social circle do not understand, is that the process of establishing a new identity and all that goes with it, takes a huge amount of time.

Also, the adjustment to and the reminders of the absence of the person, bring an ongoing confrontation with sadness that does not go away in a few weeks. Well then, how long? In all honesty, no one really knows. Who can answer the question, "When will you get used to your new surroundings?"

We know that grief revisits on many occasions throughout life; that is normal and to be expected. And, in theory the experts tell us that in six or eight months, even up to two years, certain mourning behavior can be expected to lessen. Nonetheless, never forget that there are as many grieving styles as there are lifestyles.

Every mourner's grief is like a fingerprint--no two are alike. This is so because every relationship is one of a kind. One thing is clear: grief takes a whole lot longer than the general public has been conditioned to believe.

So if you are providing support, be patient. Don't try to hurry someone along, as hard as that is for you. And if you are mourning, you will know when its time to become restoration oriented. Avoid those who are rushing you, and seek the support of those who know that grief lessens at its own pace.