

*April*

## Healing Grief vs. Closure

In literature about grief there are many meanings given to closure or getting over it or letting go. In society and the general public, the meaning of these terms is even more vague and unclear.

It seems to me that the vague meaning of closure, letting go and getting over it in our society is that we are done grieving, we are over the loss and the pain, and we should forget about it. Now, this is a very generalized statement and may very well not be the meaning many people give to these terms. However, these terms tend to be confusing to many people as they are told to 'find closure,' 'get over it,' or 'let go' when they are grieving.

I am not particularly fond of these terms and prefer to talk with people about healing grief rather than getting over grief. I thought it might be useful for me to clarify and define what I mean by the term 'healing grief.'

Healing grief is very different from getting over it or finding closure. I don't know that we ever really 'get over' a loss. When we experience a loss, however big or small, we change. I've heard people describe this change as feeling broken, shattered, cracked, having something missing, feeling empty, being torn in two, or just feeling not right.

When we heal, we don't forget our loss, our memories don't die, we don't suddenly never again miss what was lost, or become an excessively cheerful Pollyanna type person. Healing isn't about getting back to 'who you were' or making things the same as they used to be. The pain of healing is the knowledge that what was will never be the same form again.

Healing is much more gentle and subtle. Healing is the knitting together of the broken pieces, the new design of the shattered bits, the filling of the empty hole, or the stitching up of the torn parts. Healing is the creating of something new and whole from the pieces of the old. The creation will not look or feel the same but it can be just as beautiful and fulfilling and complete. Healing is a way of honoring our loss, the death of our old selves and the creation of our new selves.

I have struggled with healing grief and understanding what that meant to me. It wasn't until I'd healed from much of my own grief that the meaning was clear to me. I attended a women's retreat with the intention of coming out the other side of years of grief. I had done a great deal of healing but didn't quite feel whole yet. One of the activities offered at the retreat was a oneness blessing. I've had an image in my head for years of a beautiful mosaic heart that had been shattered over and over. This image was the symbol for my grief and I'd been struggling for years to put it back the way it had been before the first shattering. While experiencing this oneness blessing, I could see very clearly in my mind the last pieces of the broken mosaic heart reforming and creating a different yet just as beautiful heart. For the first time in years, I felt whole.

That is my description of healing and how I came to understand it. I'd love to hear what healing means to you and how you came to understand it!

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<http://www.healing-grief-support.com>