

Learning to live with loss:

Growing up means realizing that grief is a part of love

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When we were little, death felt like it was just a shadow in the background: a word that belonged to grown-ups and not us. We thought life was eternal. We didn't know much about things like diseases or tragedies that happen in today's world, but then at some point as we mature reality hits, and we learn that life isn't untouchable.

Maybe it's losing a family member or hearing about a tragedy circulating amongst adults, but suddenly death isn't just a word anymore. With it comes grief without warning, and it doesn't care whether or not we're ready. It often makes us realize how quickly things can change and how short life can be.

As kids, some of us may have attended funerals. Whether we knew the person or not, most of us can remember the tears or expressionless faces of those who tried to keep it together, but one thing is for sure. When we're younger, we don't think we'll ever have to be in the same position as those grieving. However, at some point in life, we will experience it for ourselves. The first time I had the unfortunate chance of experiencing a tragedy of my own it changed my perspective on life and death.

It was January 7, 2021. Days before this, my family and I knew my uncle wasn't doing very well. He had been diagnosed with Covid-19, and we

weren't able to tell whether or not he was worsening or recovering because my uncle was in Mexico at the time. All we got were phone call updates that my mom received from my grandma. With each answered call, there was fear of what my grandma would say. Then, we got the final call. "Your uncle's dead."

At that moment, I wasn't old enough to truly understand grief. I looked around at my mom crying, my sister in tears, and the sad, yet empty expressions on my brother and dad's faces. I didn't know what to feel. I didn't know whether I should cry like my mom and sister or keep my emotions to myself like my dad and brother. As a 10-year-old, my coping mechanism was to keep everything to myself and to hold on to the thought that my uncle wasn't in pain anymore. Deep down I felt an emotion that I wasn't familiar with; it was grief, but I didn't fully recognize it at the time.

Three years later, and grief came knocking on my door again. This time my grandpa had passed away after years of his fight with cancer. This time, I knew grief and the full extent of the pain it had to offer. For me, I experienced what is known as inhibited grief. I didn't show any external emotion after getting the news of my grandpa's passing. I kept everything to myself, while my mom expressed her

grief externally. She cried continuously.

I was now old enough to recognize that grief is different for everyone. Some may cry, get mad, or even go into a state of shock. The way one deals with those emotions is different for each person.

I coped by looking at the memories I shared while my loved ones were still here. On the other hand, my mom talked to my dad about her grief. My sister talked to my brother, my brother talked to my sister, my dad talked to my mom, but I didn't talk to anyone. Not because I didn't have anyone, but because I didn't want to. I wanted to keep everything to myself, and not talk about what made me feel the way I did when I got the news.

As a kid I also thought that being vulnerable was what made you weak, which influenced the way I reacted. While that wasn't true, it was what I thought was true when I was younger.

As I got older, I learned that grief is something we all go through differently, and that's okay. However you grieve, it shows how much someone really meant to you. Even if you don't always show it on the outside, it doesn't mean you don't feel it. What I've learned is that it's okay to cry, to talk, or even to stay quiet if that's how you cope. The most important part is recognizing the grief and dealing with it in your own way. You can't just ignore it. That isn't

Helpful Tips for Grieving and Healing

Importance of Self-Care

Remember to take care of yourself when grieving.

- Do breathing exercises
- Talk to a friend
- Write down your thoughts
- Be active in some way

Taking care of your body and mind is important while dealing with grief.



What To Do

When grieving, there are many things you should consider:

- Be kind to yourself
- Take time to be happy, even if it's difficult
- Recognize your emotions

Helpful Resorces

If you feel overwhelmed, talk to someone:

- 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- The Crisis Text Line--text HOME to 741741
- Teen Line--call 800-852-8336 or text TEEN to 838255

You're not alone. There are resources that can guide you through tough times.

<https://www.dougy.org/>

healthy.

As we grow older, we have to mature, and sadly part of that maturity is dealing with death and grief.

Although the pain of losing someone will always linger, holding on to the memories and love you shared with

them gives you the strength to move forward. They may no longer be with you, but they will always have a place in the story of your life that they helped write. The process of grieving is healthy and honors your loved one.