

Part 3: How to be Okay With Being Okay

It's not surprising that, in general, people want to be free of their suffering. Yet, in some cases, there may be aspects of the mind that are not okay with being okay. For instance, have you ever tried to pull someone out of their anger and then in turn they got angry at you? The reason that this occurs is because part of the mind may believe that by letting go of the anger, it might be saying that the action was okay and forgivable. Or, that aspect of the mind may believe that by letting go of the anger, it actually endangers the person more. Even if you ask the person if they would like to not be angry and they answer yes, there still may be an aspect of the deeper mind that will keep the anger in place making it very difficult for the person to move past the anger. It is also similar with grief in that many people have an internal conflict of being free of feeling grief.

For the effective elimination of grief, it is helpful for the individual to accept being okay – both consciously and unconsciously. Any objections, whether consciously expressed or not, must be carefully addressed by the therapist before being able to clear the grief on all levels. For example, when asked, "If you were free of your grief, would that make your son feel bad?" A response of, "Yeah, I probably thought he'd feel bad if I'm not grieving for him" identifies a disruptive element to the person being free of their suffering. Instead, a deeper exploration can help the person realize, "He wouldn't want me to feel miserable, and he would want me to feel happy every time that I thought of him." By dispelling the notion that it is beneficial for the other person for you not to feel okay, we establish that your well-being is not only advantageous for you but the entire world. Reflect on whether you would want people to feel endlessly distressed every time they think of you. I'm pretty sure that your answer to this question is no.

Additionally, people in mourning might perceive their grief as the only connection to their departed loved one. In such a scenario, it's understandable why they would resist anything that could potentially sever this connection. However, I believe that, in reality, grief is the main thing disrupting the very connection they are seeking to preserve. I've encountered many individuals who express deep grief to the extent that they consciously avoid thoughts about the departed person. This avoidance even extends to positive memories and recollections of joyful experiences, as they fear that acknowledging these moments would intensify their sense of loss. As one client shared, "I find myself pushing away thoughts because it's very painful. It's hard for me to look at his pictures of the good times because I don't see or remember him as healthy, confident, loving, and sweet, even though that is how he was." Moreover, some individuals steer clear of recalling less pleasant experiences with the departed person, as they believe it is inappropriate to harbor memories that evoke criticism. The notion of "You can't criticize him because he's dead" prevails in their minds. This can disrupt the person's ability to be able to more fully process the upsetting thoughts and feelings and forgive the person. With grief, due to the pain, individuals tend to avoid both negative memories (associated with anger or frustration) and

positive memories (associated with sadness and longing). Consequently, they unintentionally erase the entirety of their experiences with that person. Grief, far from fostering connection, actually erases the connection forged through shared experiences.

So, what exactly prompts grief during this process? It's the mind's attempt to prompt actions that foster a connection with, let's say, a sister. However, when prompted to discuss or reminisce about her, the response might be, "I don't want to talk about it; it's too painful" or "No, I can't look at this book full of pictures of her; it's too painful." I believe that loss is more of an abstract thought than a reality. The genuine value derived from close relationships lies in the experiences of that closeness, and such experiences, once acquired, can never be truly lost. Furthermore, how can you lose experiences that you have not had or couldn't have? For example, how can I lose a movie that I've already seen and how can I lose a sequel of that movie if one is never made? You have experienced wonderful things with another that can never be lost. However, grief disrupts your ability to fully experience those wonderful things through memories and feelings.

A common belief is that the intensity of pain is directly linked to the depth of love felt for the departed person. Under this belief, one might hesitate to live their life without grief. I firmly believe that pain and love are not inherently interdependent on one another. I've encountered many individuals who harbored contempt and animosity towards the person who passed yet experienced prolonged, intense grief and pain when the subject of the person came up. Conversely, there are those who deeply loved and cared for someone but did not undergo pain following the death of that person.

Concerns may also arise about potential judgment from others if one is perceived as not grieving enough. This can lead to a fear of being seen as lacking in love or that there is something wrong with them. For example, imagine a widow discussing her adaptation and positive experiences after the death of a loved one. There is often intense societal pressure to continue grieving, reinforcing the perception that ongoing grief is a measure of one's worth and the love you share.

Another strategy to alleviate grief involves addressing distortions rooted in regrettable events. Distorted thoughts such as "I should have visited my dad instead of going on vacation with my family" or other instances involving guilt can significantly exacerbate a person's grief. These distortions often stem from a complex interplay between fear of death, moralistic thinking, and a desire for fairness and goodness. Unfinished business, like not having the chance to say goodbye or a last encounter being less than positive, can also contribute to ongoing distress. People may harbor regrets such as expressing anger in a final interaction, recognizing that not all connections end with profound expressions of affection. I have found that Rapid Resolution Therapy is very effective in helping people to see through and get past these distorted beliefs that have been keeping them in a state of guilt and resentment complicating the grief. Traditional therapy tends to only focus on the intellect or the emotional aspects of the conscious mind while RRT focuses on helping to shift both the conscious/unconscious and the primitive/modern aspects of the mind

simultaneously helping the change get all the way through.

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