

MYTHS ABOUT GRIEF

Some of us suffer more because of the myths and unrealistic expectations that society holds about grief. Many people fail to allow themselves to do what they have to in their grief because they think that there is something wrong with them. Many feel that they should be “over” their grief long before they ever could be. Many hold expectations for themselves that are unrealistic and that only cause them to berate themselves unfairly when their expectations cannot be met. Below are some examples of these myths.

All losses are the same.

It takes two months to get over your grief.

All bereaved people grieve in the same way.

Grief always declines over time in a steadily decreasing fashion.

When grief is resolved, it never comes up again,

Family members will always help grievers.

Children grieve like adults.

Feeling sorry for yourself is not allowable.

You should not think about your deceased loved one at the holidays because it will make you too sad.

Bereaved individuals only need to express their feelings and they will resolve their grief.

Expressing feelings that are intense is the same as losing control.

There is no reason to be angry at your deceased loved one.

Only sick individuals have physical problems in grief.

Because you feel crazy, you are going crazy.

You should feel only sadness that your loved one has died.

Infant death shouldn't be too difficult to resolve because you didn't know the child that well.

Children need to be protected from grief and death.

Rituals and funerals are unimportant in helping us deal with life and death in contemporary America.

Being upset and grieving means that you do not believe in God or trust your religion.

You and your family will be the same after the death as before your loved one died.

You will have no relationship with your loved one after the death.

The intensity and length of your grief are testimony to your love for the deceased.

There is something wrong with you if you do not always feel close to your other family members, since you should be happy that they are still alive.

There is something wrong with you if you think that part of you has died with your loved one.

If someone has lost a spouse, he or she knows what it is like to lose a child.

It is better to tell bereaved people to “be brave” and “keep a stiff upper lip” because then they will not have to experience as much pain.

If you are a widow, you should grieve like other widows.

Losing someone to sudden death is the same as losing someone to anticipated death.

You will not be affected much if your parent dies when you are an adult.

Parents usually divorce after a child dies.

It is not important for you to have social support in your grief.

Once your loved one has died it is better not to focus on him or her, but to put him or her in the past and go on with your life.

How many of these statements do you believe to be true? Each one of them is a myth. None of them is true. Yet, if you believe that they are, you will expect yourself to act and feel accordingly. If you think that you are wrong, for example, because you are angry at your loss or because you are sad during the holidays, you will be putting an additional burden on yourself. These feelings are normal. There is nothing wrong with you.

Excerpted from the book *Grieving: How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies*; by Therese A Rando. Ph.D.