

Take Good Care

A Stephy's Place Reflection

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“The voice of grief is rather convincing... This voice in your head is the first thing you hear in the morning and the last thing you hear at night. It drives with you to work. It stays with you at lunch. Its message is so consistent that, because of its repetitive power, you may be inclined to believe it. But, as persuasive as the voice of grief is, everything it says is a lie.”

Christina Rasmussen, *Second Firsts*

In the early, raw period of grief, some people stop giving a shit about themselves. We may lose a sense of purpose, of meaning, or a desire to do anything. This is when grief has its most powerfully convincing voice, but **grief is a liar and a thief**. During this time there isn't much we can do for the others in our life either; it can become an awesome struggle to take care of the children, make the lunches, go to work, hell to even to get dressed and take a shower. Our energy is low and our abilities are diminished from sorrow and the preoccupation of the loss.

Often the trauma of our loss can make us feel like the world is no longer a safe place. Fear is a huge part of grief. The death of someone can often make us quite afraid of many things, even life itself. We can so fear the future that we don't want to move into it. We can so fear the present that we want to run away from it.

“Courage doesn't happen in the absence of fear. It happens because of fear. Courage is refusing to let fear win. Courage is reclaiming one's life in the midst of the rubble that loss leaves behind. Courage is saying ‘yes’ to life even if one's heart is pounding.”

Pat Schwiebert, R.N. Fear and Grief

In his book *Becoming Radiant*, Tom Zuba believes there is a healthy response to grief and an unhealthy one. **“There is a response that will help us heal and a response that will keep us stuck.”** He says that in grief we have three possible choices that we continually face: 1. We may choose to remain stagnant, 2. We may choose to fall deeper into the ‘dark pit’ or 3. We can choose to live.

In our meditation that begins every support group we say: *Let us set our intention to heal.*” These are powerful and important words. It is a statement indicating that we want to feel better, that we want to move toward light and life, toward laughter and peace. If we can say this and mean it, we are already healing. The process has begun.

Self-Care isn't a new buzzword, nor a New- Age idea, it's essential and necessary for healing and living. Every counselor, therapist, and grief author emphasizes its crucial importance.

Unfortunately, many of us grew up learning that if you focused at all on yourself, you were selfish, self-centered, or narcissistic, and so the concept of self-care may go against our grain.

But let me ask you a question, **If you don't take care of yourself, who will?** Our primary responsibility in life is to take care of ourselves.

Self-care is about taking proactive steps to improve our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. It's about filling our tank so that we can go forward. If our tank is empty we can't move anywhere.

When grief really gets a hold of us, it can try to steal our self-worth, self-esteem, and our desire to take care of ourselves. We really do need to love ourselves, after all, our hearts are broken, someone we loved has died. We very much need to show ourselves **self-compassion**. It's much easier to be kind to others than to ourselves for some reason. But we need to **treat ourselves with kindness and acceptance by not judging our feelings or emotions and by being gentle and kind with ourselves.** In taking care of ourselves, we are caring for the others in our life.

Take good care!