

RECOVERING FROM GRIEF WITH PSYCHOPHONETICS

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Grief and loss are organic aspects of human life. Everything we have as living beings in time and space and biological life, we are bound to lose at some point. Loss and grief are incorporated into our deepest nature together with the promise of self renewal. We are all potentially equipped for dealing with it well - as a potential.

So many other natural capacities we possessed instinctively and traditionally in older times, but nowadays we have lost to a large extent the inherent cultural capacity to grieve. This means we now have to consciously create a process to experience, digest, recover and grow from the experience of grief.

I wish to outline an approach for understanding the process of grief and a possible methodical approach for supporting people who are suffering. I have to say in advance that this approach can only become a useful tool to help other people who suffer from grief if they have first applied it successfully to themselves.

Grief is everywhere in our lives: we lose the innocence of our childhood when we become adolescents; we lose some of the playfulness of adolescents with the responsibilities of young adulthood; we lose some of the freedom and the energy of youth by becoming mature men and women, by joining in relationship and forming families and with the huge responsibilities of parenthood; we lose our strength, productivity and social relevance of the middle of our life with the approach of old age, retirements and the weakness of the ending of our lives; and then we lose our lives altogether.

In between these losses we lose the safety of our family home, the death of dear ones and of our parents; we lose the love we shared as relationships die, and our lovers, wives and husbands upon separation or death; we lose the closeness of life with our loved children when they grow up into adulthood and leave home; we lose vital capacities when we become sick or injured or old; we lose jobs, communities, friends, colleagues, initiatives, communities, homes, towns, languages and countries – when we move on; and worst of all we often lose the dreams of our youth, our idealism, the trust in our ability to fulfilled our true potential; we lose our faith and sometimes the very meaning of our lives.

We live with loss as much as we live with renewal. We must be potentially equipped for the experience of grief as it is so much a part of the cycle of our lives, and yet, often we are at a loss in

how to cope with it creatively, and how to help others effectively. When a loved one dies or separates from us – it is as if the sun does not shine on us anymore, and the joy and the meaning of life are gone.

How can we face this challenge practically, helpfully and creatively? How do we recover and pick up ourselves and move on after such a shock to our system?

The following are four insights into the understanding of grief and the process of recovery, based on many years of Psychophonetics practice.

1. Damage to life body

It is widely assumed that grief is primarily an emotional reality. Of course it is, but not primarily so. A serious loss hits the Life-Body itself. The Life Body is the energy-organism which holds together and conducts the operation of the physical body and its physiology. It consists not of chemical matter but of life dynamics. It could be called the 'Environmental Body'. It has many names in many cultures: Chi, Prahna, Chaiim (Hebrew), Morphogenetic Field (Sheldrake) or Etheric Body (Steiner), Aura, Habit Body and Time Body. While invisible to the physical eye it is perceptible inwardly by everyone who is able to experience the difference between being fresh or exhausted, healthy or sick, energetic or not. This is this body that is broken in serious loss, causing the injury that we normally call grief. It is similar to the breaking of the transparent glass walls of an aquarium, letting the invisible water be poured out, and the fish inside loses its life support environment which it had unconsciously before. Loss breaks our life body, and the suffering of it is grief.

When a person close to us dies or separates, it is as if a part of our body has been cut off. The physical body remains intact, so there could be an illusion that the body is whole, but it is not. An essential component is missing, and life as it has been is shattered. It is like being hit by a car, invisibly. From this point of view a grieving person needs primarily bodily support, they must be held, wrapped up, nurtured, their suffering acknowledged, their shaking bodies held and soothed.

A lot of 'debriefing conversations', verbal sharing and intellectual talks at the initial phase of loss, is not very helpful. Friendship, caring, basic human support is helpful. Real human closeness is of utmost importance. Grief is the experience of the Life Body being torn apart. The damage takes place in the living 'Time Body'. The healing has to take place in the same dimension.

2. Contracting with the contraction

The second phenomena observed in regards to grief is a direct result of the breaking of the Life Body resulting from the severe loss: the vital forces of the Life Body contract into a small space in the inner body. The whole system shrinks into a very narrow place inside. It is similar to the dynamics of

freezing: the warmth contracts from the periphery to the centre to protect vital organs for as long as possible. That shrinking process leaves the outer layers of the body outside: hands, legs, the whole muscular system are left out of the inner contraction, weakening the ability to reach out and to interact and be active in the outer world.

Paradoxically, the most effective response to this situation is to periodically 'contract into that contraction': physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. There is an objective need for a period of contracting. All attempts to behave 'business as usual' are exhausting and delaying the recovery from the damage. One has to contract in order to build from inside a new source of life, to bounce back when the time comes.

Of course the normal demands of life usually would not allow a long period of withdrawal and contraction. Children, work, relationship, professional and domestic obligations must be cared for. Also there is often pressure from people around us to behave normally, recover quickly, and to reassure others that we are okay, when really we are not okay. However, there is also a need to return to normal life, to be distracted from the constant pain, to interact and be normal, and to prove to oneself and others that life continues. A grieving person is in the middle of all these contradictory pressures.

What I find useful and practical is to create short spaces in the day when one consciously retreats from engagement with the outer world and from people and to consciously 'contract with the contraction'. That might sound like strange advice, but it works. A grieving person can be encouraged to give oneself the right to take 'time out' from normal life, to experience consciously the pain, the weakness and the contraction of life forces, to stop trying to be okay, and to identify for long moments with the internal injury. A few moments of doing this consciously and fully could liberate one's ability to function more normally for the rest of the day. In Psychophonetics grief recovery sessions, we encourage people to practice long moments of conscious contraction, physically and emotionally, to identify with the real inner situation of the Life Body that has been damaged.

The pain and the contraction usually concentrates in specific places in the body that can be directly sensed by the grieving person: heart, chest or solar plexus etc. These places need to be periodically held, even pressed in, and then released. This pressing and releasing of the bodily contraction can release emotions, completely guided by the intuition of the grieving person so that trapped emotions from the body can be released, resulting in a sense of relief through crying, with the return of warmth and life into flow.

3. Human Sharing

Sharing emotional pain as it is with an understanding human being is essential for the start of the recovery process. This must be met with complete acceptance of the expression as it comes. Any

attempt to fix, advise, guide, reassure, analyse, preach, intellectualise, is not empathetic and is not helpful for grieving. Only complete empathy with the suffering as it is can help it on the emotional level, while the body is recovering from the shock. Pure empathy is required.

4. Creating a new centre of identity

This is the most challenging and the most rewarding dimension of recovery from grief. Our self image, identity and orientation are shaken and some foundation has disappeared beneath our feet. A reconstruction is required, from inside out. A new centre must be discovered or created from the inside. There is an objective need to re-invent our self from within.

In times like this, whatever the person has as inner richness of experience, knowledge, belief, capacity, love, relationships must all be mobilised to create a new person with a renewed centre, without what was lost. For some this challenge is too much. They have not brought into this threshold enough inner strength to build on. But in everyone's spirit there is a potential of renewal, and as long as one is still alive, it can be activated.

This is an intense challenge for the counsellor, coach, therapist, or friend. What can you build on when everything is shattered? This takes some training and some solid conceptual approach to the fundamental nature of human beings. If the helper thinks that human beings consist only of body, emotions and intellect, renewal out of severe grief is hardly possible. In the face of grief, a conception of human beings as beings of body, emotions, mind **and** individual creative spirit, is crucial in order to be truly helpful. Only the independent creative human spirit can do it. The practical question is how to activate this in the middle of feeling shattered by grief?

Paradoxically, only through a complete experience of the suffering as it is can a new dimension of awareness and healing be born. In some special moments in the day there must be a process of complete 'Self-Empathy' with our own suffering, leading to self observation, ownership of our own experience, containment of the pain, and creating a new personal meaning of the experience. Continuous love for that which was lost is a healing process, against all the other instinctive reactions against it. The body is damaged by loss. The soul does not have to be damaged. That is optional. Love can cross the threshold of loss, and stay alive.

A lot more could be said about the experience of grief and the process of recovery and there is a lot of literature about it. In this short article, I have outlined four insights into the field of grief recovery from the perspective of Psychophonetics and its practical application which could open many possibilities of recovery processes.

I can only hope that the above reflections can be of help to grieving people and for those who are trying to help them in their dark hour.

