

How Long Will This Take?

Bereavement counselors are frequently asked questions about the length of time needed to complete the mourning process. As a society, we are used to having things fast and convenient. We have developed and reinforced habits whereby we attempt to finish a task or activity as quickly as possible and move on to the next one. These habits are applied to all areas of our lives, including work, relationships, leisure, and even grief and mourning.

The need to hurry up and be over a loss is often reinforced by friends and families. How many times have you heard “You need to get on with your life,” “Are you still crying?”, “I’ve got this great woman (or man) I want you to meet,” or “Why don’t you have another child?”

It is not helpful when a professional gives a mourner a time frame. When told “You’ll be fine after a year,” what happens when a year is up and you are still struggling with the loss of your loved one? You might feel like a failure, or assume there is something wrong with you. What about the flip side? If you are told that it will take about a year, and you are beginning to enjoy life again at the six month point, what happens then? Many people in this circumstance begin questioning their love for the person who died, experience guilt, and again suspect that “something is wrong with me.”

No matter how we may try, grief and mourning cannot be rushed. It is a process, or journey, and it takes time. The length of time it takes will be as unique as each individual mourner and the relationship being mourned.

If in an accident, you suffered a deep physical wound, you would need special care, and plenty of time to heal. The same is true when you suffer a major loss. While you cannot see it, you have a deep wound, nonetheless. The wound caused by a great loss also requires special care, plenty of time, and patience to heal.

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