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COPING WHEN LOVED ONES PASS ON

By Pippa Neve

Even though Spiritualism teaches the reality of life after death and communication with the Larger Life, some, but not all, Spiritualists find a loved one's passing difficult to come to terms with.

Step forward Pippa Neve, who, in this specially commissioned feature, gives valuable advice on coping with grief.

Experienced and highly intuitive, Pippa has a true affinity in understanding emotions and is passionate about the physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of her clients.

Originally from the UK, Pippa now runs a thriving healing practice in Sydney's Inner West, Australia.

She also works with international clients online via Zoom or distant healing, many of whom followed Pippa from her previous practice in the UK.

Pippa was a healer at Paul's Cancer Support Centre in London, working with patients and their families to provide much-needed emotional and spiritual support.

I HAVE been sitting with my thoughts around grief for quite some time after the fairly recent passing of my mother, having found that it uncovered a whole myriad of layers and emotions that were both subtly and yet distinctly different to the feelings I experienced around my father's death seven years ago.

I found it to be a nuanced web, with interconnecting threads that stretch all the way back through my ancestral lines and emotions which affects each one of us differently, and can change and fluctuate on a daily or even hourly basis.

What is grief?

We all experience times of unavoidable stress, loss or sadness, but the first thing to say around the subject of grief is that there really is no rule book or prescriptive manual when it comes to dealing with it and it's important to understand that it can be different for each and every one of us.

It has, however, brought me comfort to look at what grief actually is. To my mind it is this: a powerful myriad of emotions and

physical reactions to the loss of someone or something we value.

Grief can be losing a person due to death, a reaction to the breaking up of a relationship, losing your job or even mourning the loss of hopes and dreams for our future.

All of these seem to weave through several stages and can require us to reach out for a little help to move through what can feel like such overwhelming emotions in a safe and supported way and come out the other side.

Within my practice, I feel it's of the utmost importance to create a secure and nurturing environment for clients who have experienced loss in all shapes and forms.

Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross suggests that there are five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. However, David Kessler, who worked with Elisabeth, suggests that there is a sixth stage – meaning.



PIPPA NEVE: "Be gentle with yourself."

The stages of grief

As a healing practitioner, "Be gentle with yourself" is the first piece of advice I give to anyone who is enmeshed within grief (whether that's a client or a friend). It is advice that I've had to feel into and follow myself since my mother passed away.

The stages of grief aren't always linear. Neither do they necessarily emerge one at a time.

Sometimes coming in waves, grief can leave us feeling overwhelmed, lost and alone; we need to be able to allow ourselves to move through at our own pace and often need some support.

The various stages of grief can be identified as initially experiencing shock, denial or disbelief, which is then followed by pain, anger and bargaining, sadness and reflection, and perhaps even guilt and loneliness.

It's only after these emotions are felt that there emerges a chink of light – a sense of moving through the darkness in the form of release, resolution and finally acceptance and hope.

As I touched upon earlier, there is no rulebook in the form of right or wrong with any of this. The important thing is to be gentle with yourself and reach out for help when you need it.

When we look deeper at this initial stage of shock, denial and/or disbelief, we can see that these feelings arise as much due to the cause of death as the death itself, and we need time to process not only the news, but the finality of the situation.

After this, the pain of our loss takes hold and we truly dive into the process of grief – or rather, we are thrown into it. This is when anger can rise up within us and we begin to bargain: the “What ifs,” the regrets and so forth, which can in turn lead to depression.

In going to the heart of understanding denial, I would suggest that it is part of the process of coming to terms with our loss, particularly if a loved one dies suddenly or their life was cut short unexpectedly.

It may initially feel insurmountable, but slowly the process of understanding means we are able to come to terms with the situation.

When my father had a tragic accident which caused him to be airlifted to hospital, I was lucky enough to be with him. He was already in a coma on arrival, but I knew he would still be able to hear me.

I was quickly told that it wouldn't be long, not even long enough for my brother to say his goodbyes.

As I chatted to my father, I placed one hand on his heart centre and held his hand in my other. I told him I loved him and that I knew he loved me.

I also told him I forgave him for any wrongdoings and asked him for his forgiveness, pointing out that we'd always done our best.

I knew my father didn't believe that the soul moves on, but reminded him that he had promised to keep an open mind as to what to expect.

I then began to list all those that he loved whom I knew to be in Spirit or those that I thought might be. As I did so, I felt my father begin to lift out of his body.

He passed over shortly afterwards. The experience has given me so much comfort, despite the shock I felt at the time. I still remember the whole experience so clearly as if it were yesterday.

Anger

It's very important to highlight that anger is often a key player when we lose someone we love. Again, spiritual healing helps us move through each stage of the grieving process.

When we first hear the news, it can be such a shock that we energetically come out of our physical body; we may not want

to be in our body because the news is quite simply too huge for the conscious mind to bear.

Spiritual healing brings us back into the vessel of the body because it grounds and centres us.

It also enables us to be held in loving energy as we come to terms with our loss and as we move through grief in our own way, being supported by someone who understands the process, thereby helping to ease the pain.

Acceptance and meaning

When we lose a loved one, there are often practical matters and arrangements which need to be overseen – not just a form



WHEN grieving, “Give yourself permission to feel the whole gamut of emotions.”

of gathering, but the legal, financial and practical side of things.

As we grieve, this can all be extremely overwhelming. Healing can support us emotionally as we work through everything which has to be organised. All that needs to be faced until we are able to not just accept, but as David Kessler suggests, make meaning of our loss.

Holding our loved ones in our hearts, feeling them with us as we move through our lives, smiling as we remember them, feeling the love that we shared and knowing that it is real are all beautiful and poignant ways of finding a sense of meaning entrenched within the sadness of loss.

When I think about the stage of acceptance, I can't help but recall my relationship with my late mother. I loved her dearly, but it certainly wasn't always the easiest of relationships.

After her death, as we were making all the necessary arrangements, I was on an emotional rollercoaster. There were days when I cried and those when I was also very angry.

I found myself mourning the mother I would have liked her to have been: a warm, loving, caring mother, and then began to be able to allow myself to admit to myself that she had sometimes been emotionally very cruel.

I realised that I would never have dared allow myself to think this way while she was still alive, but I knew it to be true. As I sat with it, in truth, it began to resonate through me.

Naturally, this felt very uncomfortable to begin with because I felt guilty for thinking such thoughts, but when I gave myself permission to accept it, I began to feel calmer.

I began to let go of the old pains and hurts that I had struggled to release before. Quite remarkably, I began to feel lighter and started to *be* lighter.

Moving through this process, I was able to find an even deeper degree of compassion and empathy for those who turn to me for support when they are experiencing grief. It enables me to hold space for them to heal and move through it in a nourishing and sensitive way.

Allowing yourself to feel

My final thoughts on grief when it comes to the death of a person are these: for those of us who lose a loving, kind person, we grieve their loss. However, for those of us who grieve for someone with whom we had a difficult relationship, it can be more challenging.

We mourn the person we would have liked them to have been or maybe we mourn the fact that we no longer have the opportunity to tell them how we feel – the good, the bad and the ugly.

Give yourself permission to feel the whole gamut of emotions that you feel; allow yourself to feel the things you perhaps think you shouldn't be feeling. It's all okay – feel your feelings. Let them pass. Let them go. All is well.

How to cope with the loss of a much-loved pet

For many of us, our pets are much-loved family members, so much so that some of us refer to them as our “fur babies.” It's my firm belief that grieving for our pets is no different from grieving for anyone we have loved and lost.

My dog stole my heart within moments of our meeting. I fret when she is unwell, so know that I will be devastated when the time comes for her to pass over.

However, I also know that if my husband and I have to make the decision for her to be put down, as hard as it would be, we wouldn't want her to suffer or be in pain any longer than needs be.

Other than this, I would suggest that the

grief is the same; there are no rules, but we need to allow ourselves to feel our feelings with the loss and grieve in whatever way helps to ease the pain of it until we can smile once again, remembering all the joy they have given us.

What I find beautiful is the belief shared by many that our pets come to us to heal our hearts, helping us to give and receive love unconditionally. Just like our human loved ones, we can feel their presence around us after they have passed.

We can also give our pets healing, channelling energy to ease their suffering and help them on their journey to the Other Side. Love, after all, is the greatest healer there is.

I also recommend that after the sadness and shock of losing a much-loved pet, healing for the person suffering the loss can be a great comfort.

What is a grief doula?

A grief doula (also known as a soul midwife) provides support, comfort and guidance where needed both for the dying and their family.

This can include offering assistance and guidance as the person who is transitioning to their passing moves through their end-of-life care and through their death, and in supporting the family through their subsequent bereavement.

Understandably, many people are afraid of death and dying, and a grief doula is there to hold space as they come to terms with their diagnosis and all that it entails.

In terms of looking after the family, a grief doula is someone who holds space for a person going through the process of grief, to guide and support them through the emotional minefield that inevitably comes with losing a loved one.

How does a grief doula or a spiritual healer help someone who is dying or grieving?

The initial news that someone is dying can be the most tremendous shock, so many people need to process this themselves before they feel able to inform their loved ones.

Holding space as the dying come to terms with nearing the end of their life is an absolute honour. It can entail assisting with practical matters such as arrangements that need to be made. More importantly, it involves dealing with the person's own fears as well as those of their family.

Grief is a very personal journey; there are no rules and people react differently, as I've mentioned.

It's perfectly normal to want to feel held and supported through this journey, to have help with easing the pain and any sense of guilt and/or blame that might arise

– and especially to have someone beside you to help ease the sense of loss.

Grief is a very individual experience, so each situation is different. Speaking as an accredited spiritual healer, my primary focus is to work with my client's energy.

Firstly, I work with someone who is grieving the approaching end of their life to help them to ground and centre, bringing them back into their physical body because this makes it easier to focus on decisions that need to be made.

Secondly, I work with them to heal their fear, assisting them with being able to die both free from pain and free from that fear, so that they are hopefully able to pass on with a smile.

In helping those grieving the loss of a loved one, again, firstly I work to ground and centre them, but also assist them through their grief as they come to terms



SPIRITUAL healing "is a wonderful tool to help people come to terms with their loss."

with the physical loss of losing a loved one.

This involves helping them to understand that although they have lost the physical presence of the person, their loved one is still with them.

One of the things I remind my clients of is that their loved one will always be in their heart.

Once the pain has eased, they will be able to remember shared experiences with joy, even beginning to smile each time they think of them and holding a steadfast inner knowing that they are continually loved and supported – essentially trusting that the loving connection is still there.

As illustrated by sharing my own experiences with my mother's passing, it can be more difficult if there has not been a positive relationship with the person who has died.

In this case, we often need to allow ourselves time to grieve the person we wanted them to be, allowing the pain, anger and hurt to be dissolved as we learn to accept the sense of incompleteness.

It is a case of needing to grieve the

fact that there is no longer the option of one day confronting that person for their wrongdoings and moving through the waves of emotions, good and bad, in order to ultimately be able to move forwards free from past pains and hurts.

Do grief doulas and spiritual healers recommend various ways to grieve?

Different doulas and healers offer differing tools and techniques to deal with grief and should align with the client with whom they are working.

Journalling is a wonderful way to allow emotions to flow and to be able to let them go, but some people prefer to be able to speak to someone, whether one-to-one or in a group.

In joining a grief group, people feel understood by those around them and can often open up as they hear other people's journeys and experiences, being able to acknowledge their own feelings more easily as they recognise them in others.

I would also recommend walks in nature and meditation as two excellent tools to help clear the mind and gain clarity.

Being a healer myself, I offer guided meditations and work energetically with my clients to help them with grief.

All of my meditations are written with the aim of assisting my clients to be able to connect deep within, where they are able to come to terms with their sense of loss and to begin to find a positive way to move forwards once again.

How can you find the right grief doula or spiritual healer for you?

There are lots of support groups and practitioners operating online, particularly since the pandemic started, as so many more people are experiencing a sense of loss – especially those who have been unable to be with their loved ones as they passed over.

It's always very important to find someone that you trust, someone you feel safe with, so you can truly open up and communicate how you're feeling.

It is also vital to find a person that holds space as you move through the journey of grief, so you feel safe as you work through your emotions.

Overall, I have come to realise that spiritual healing is a wonderful tool to help people come to terms with their loss, helping them to make sense of the incomprehensible and assisting them to move through these layers of grief whilst feeling supported, enabling them to move through release and resolution – or put another way – come to a state of acceptance and even hope.

■ **Want to know more? Pippa's website is at <https://pippaneve.com>**