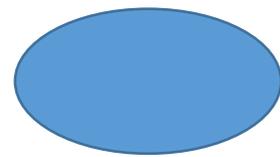


Growing Around Grief

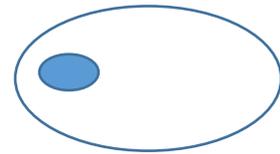
Often when we read about grief we are told that people go through various stages and that in the end the grief gets 'resolved'. This suggests that when we have moved through these stages and the 'grief work' has been done we can then 'move on'. This is not everyone's experience. Some people find that their grief never really goes away and sometimes can be as painful as it ever was.

Another way of trying to understand our grief is explained below and came from a woman who had lost her child. It might help to make sense of your own grief.

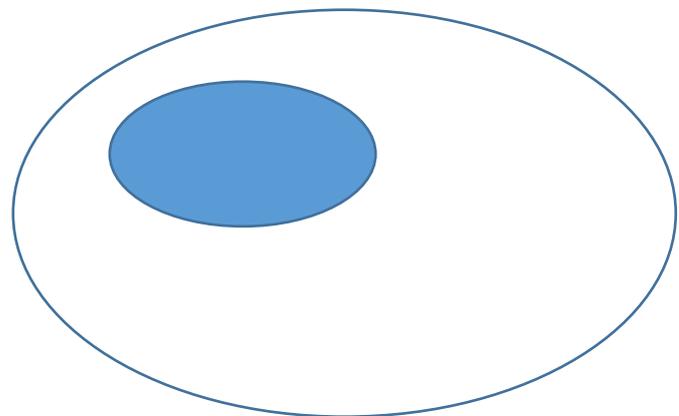
The woman's child had died some years before. At this time, she said, grief had overwhelmed her totally, filling every part of her life, awake and asleep. She drew a picture with a circle to represent her life and shading to indicate her grief. It was all consuming.



She had thought that as time went by the grief would shrink and become neatly encapsulated in her life, in a small and manageable way; she was realistic enough to imagine that it would not go away entirely.



But what happened was different. The grief stayed just as big, but her life grew around it. There were times, anniversaries or moments which reminded her of her child, when she functioned (or couldn't function) entirely from out of the shaded circle in her life and her grief felt just as intense as it every had. But more and more she was able to experience life in the larger circle of her life.



What helps some people with this view of grief (and it does not fit everyone) is that it reduces our expectation that our grief should largely go away. Often we have a sense of disloyalty to the deceased about carrying on with our lives and we get stuck or feel held back. This model shows how we can still grieve the loss of our loved one while continuing our own lives. It explains the dark days, the not so dark days and also the depth the grief has given our lives. It shows how we may have to 'grow a new life', embracing the loss into our lives as we move forward...