

Who Am I Now?

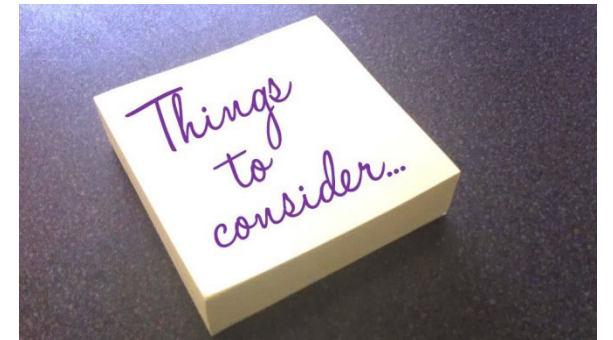
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Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants

- Will be able to define at least three Touchstones for mourners to seek on their grief journey.
- Will be able to identify at least four steps that individuals can take to rebuild or restructure their lives as they adjust to widowhood.
- Will be able to list at least three actions that can be taken to support widows or widowers as they grieve.



Understanding Grief

- The loss of someone we love is never easy and the loss of a spouse or a child is often considered the most significant losses we may encounter.
- In the early days, feelings of shock, numbness, inability to concentrate, and unending tears define our days.
- We feel lost and the path is unfamiliar.



Where Do I Start?

- Your spouse has passed away, the funeral is over, family has gone home and friends are gone.
- Now what?
- Recognize and feel your emotions.
- Honor your grief journey.
- Be patient with yourself.
- Give yourself grace.



Where Do I Start?

- Be good to yourself . . . Eat, drink plenty of water, sleep as much as you are able, let the tears flow and know that grief is very unpredictable.
- Celebrate the small things – fixing a piece of toast for breakfast, making your bed, taking a shower.
- Eventually, you'll feel like doing much more.
- There is no specific timeframe.

Healing Your Heart

- Dr. Alan Wolfelt is one of North America's leading death educators and grief counselors.
- He is the founder of the Center for Loss and Life Transition in Ft. Collins, CO.
- He has spent his career helping people heal from profound grief.
- For more information about his work, visit www.centerforloss.com



Healing Your Heart

- Dr. Wolfelt asks us to “Think of your grief as a wilderness – a vast, mountainous, inhospitable forest”.
- He describes it as unfamiliar and brutal surroundings and we are cold and tired on this journey called grief.
- He has developed the Ten Touchstones which are trail markers that let us know we are on the right path.
- Source: Wolfelt, Alan D. (2021). Understanding Your Grief. Companion Press, Ft. Collins, CO.



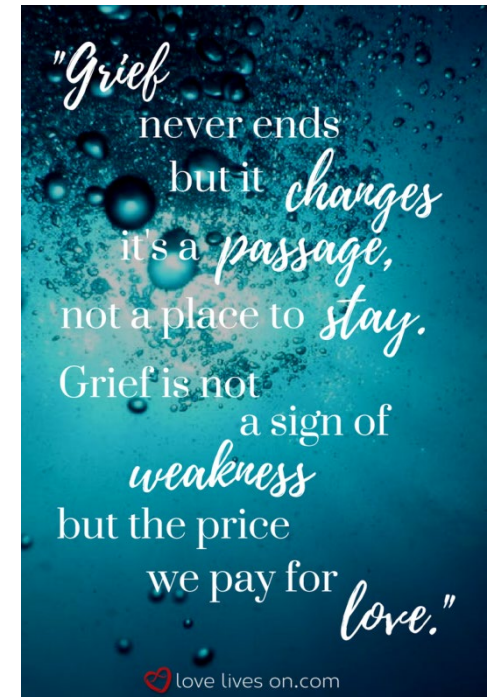
Touchstone One

Open to the Presence of Your Loss

- You cannot heal without mourning.
- To lessen the hurt, you must embrace it.
- We must learn to honor the presence of the person we love and acknowledge their absence in our life.
- Grief is not a disease, it is a normal part of love.

Touchstone One

- “Grief work” may be some of the hardest work you will ever do.
- It’s like having two full-time jobs and it’s exhausting physically, emotionally, cognitively, socially and spiritually.
- It takes a long time to realize that the pain won’t last forever.
- Without the pain of grief there would be no such thing as the joy of love.



Touchstone Two

Dispel Misconceptions About Grief

- Myth #1 - Grief and mourning progress in predictable, orderly stages.
- Myth #2 – You should move away from grief, not toward it.
- Myth #3 – Tears of grief are a sign of weakness or being “weak” in your faith.
- Myth #4 – When someone you love dies, you only grieve and mourn for the physical absence of the person.

Touchstone Two

- Myth #5 – You should try not to think about the person who died on special days like holidays, anniversaries, and birthdays.
- Myth #6 – After someone you love dies, the goal should be to “get over” your grief as soon as possible.
- Myth # 7 – When grief and mourning are finally reconciled, they never come up again.



Touchstone Three

Embrace the Uniqueness of Your Grief

- Explore the “whys” of your unique grief journey.
- The stronger your attachment to the person who died, the more difficult your grief journey will be.
- The circumstances of the death will impact your grief. Sudden or anticipated? How old was the person who died? Do you feel that you could have done something to prevent it?



Touchstone Three

- Remember that if your core support group is made up of people who are also grieving the loss, this can make your grief more difficult.
- Whatever you loved about the person will most likely be what you miss the most.
- Your cultural background (values, beliefs, traditions) will impact your grief.
- Other crises or stresses in your life can make it more difficult.

Touchstone Four

Explore Your Feelings of Loss

- Shock, Numbness, Denial and Disbelief
- Disorganization, Confusion, Searching and Yearning
- Anxiety, Panic and Fear
- Resilience or Denial
- Explosive Emotions
- Guilt, Regret, Self-Blame



Touchstone Four

- Sadness and Depression
- Caregiver Burnout
- Relief and Release
- It's Ok if it's Not Ok and ...
- It's Ok to say No
- Importance of Self-Care
- It's not selfish to look out for yourself

Touchstone Five

Understanding the Six Needs of Mourning

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death.
2. Embrace the pain of the loss.
3. Remember the person who died.
4. Develop a new self-identity.
5. Search for meaning.
6. Let others help you now – now and always.



“A strong woman knows she has strength enough for the journey, but a woman of strength knows it is in the journey where she will become strong.”
-Unknown

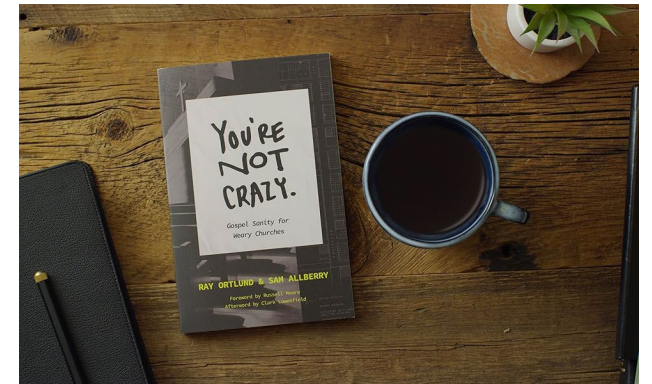
Touchstone Six

Recognize You Are Not Crazy

- Time Distortion
- Self-Focus
- Rethinking and Retelling Your Story
- Sudden Changes in Mood
- Powerlessness and Helplessness
- Grief Attacks and Grief Bursts
- Crying and Sobbing

Touchstone Six

- Linking Objects
- Symptoms of Physical Illness
- Suicidal Thoughts
- Drug or Alcohol Use
- Dreams
- Anniversaries, Holidays, Special Occasions
- Crazy Things People Say and Do
- You're not Crazy, You're Grieving



Touchstone Seven

Nurture Yourself

- Nurturing the whole person is important
- Physically
- Cognitively
- Emotionally
- Socially
- Spiritually



Touchstone Eight

Don't be afraid to ask for help

- Support groups in person
- On-line grief groups
- Grief Counselor
- Support from your church community
- Getting help in a crisis



Touchstone Eight

Reach Out for Help

The Rule of Thirds

- One third of the people in your life will be neutral in response to your grief.
- One third will be harmful to you in helping you mourn and heal.
- The final third of the people in your life will be truly empathetic and willing to help you.

Touchstone Nine

Seek Reconciliation, Not Resolution

- We can't control death or ignore our human need to grieve and mourn when death impacts our life.
- We do have the choice to help ourselves heal.
- The love we shared with the person who died was a significant chapter in our life and it is our choice how we choose to write the next chapter ... We are the author.



Touchstone Ten

Appreciate Your Transformation

As we heal in our grief journey, growth occurs in many ways:

- Being forever changed
- Finding a new normal
- Embracing your vulnerability
- Learning to use your potential
- Your responsibility to live
- Nourishing your transformed soul



How Can You Help?

- First, remember it is always better to do something than to do nothing.
- When people are unsure, they often do nothing which is not helpful at all.
- The widow or widower feels abandoned and realize that their social circle may be changing.

How Can You Help?

- Second, try to be a good listener.
- Show up, be there and pay attention to what your friend is saying.
- You don't need to offer advice and don't judge.
- Instead, listen and empathize.
- We each grieve in our own way and there is no time limit.



How Can You Help?

Third, give practical help. Don't ask; just do.

Bring a meal, mow the lawn, carpool the kids, pick up groceries, run errands.

Yes, you might make a mistake or step on someone's toes, that's better than avoiding your friend all together.

Reach out often and be compassionate.

Love Came First ...

You don't move on after loss, but you must move with. You must shake hands with grief, welcome her in, for she lives with you now.

Pull her a chair at the table and offer her comfort. She is not the monster you first thought her to be.

She is love. And she will walk with you now, stay with you now, peacefully. If you let her.

And on the days when your anger is high, remember why she came, remember who she represents.

Remember. Grief came to you, my friend because love came first.
Love came first.

~ Donna Ashworth



Treasure the Memories

