

Grief Lecture - 2026
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“When Life Gives You Lemons, Make Lemonade”
(Hear me out)

Lemonade

Lemons

- sour
- bitter
- painful to glands

Water - dilutes

- plain
- bland
- blah
- uninteresting

Sugar

- sweet
- joyful
- refreshing

Grief

Grieving

- Raw Pain
- Anger/frustration
- Sadness

Healing

- Putting one foot in front of the other
- Going through the motions
- Life is black and white

Recreating Life After Loss

- Engaging with the living
- Joy and misery co-exist
- Making new memories

Now - it's something we will drink and is refreshing - BUT - we did NOT get rid of lemons - our loss

Must DIGEST our grief in order to process it

Digestions Process when we eat

- Choose to look at what's on the plate
- Choose to pick it up
- Choose to put it in our mouth
- Choose to chew
- Choose to swallow
- Then allow digestion to work it's process
- Allow the process to sort out what is waste (doesn't serve us) and what is nutrition (what heals us and enhances our life)

If We DON'T Do This Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD)

- **Intense Yearning/Preoccupation:** Persistent and intense longing for the deceased or constant preoccupation with them. *(Have client who's child tragically died in front of them, sometimes that kind of trauma can keep someone stuck here)*
- **Avoidance Behavior:** Avoiding reminders of the deceased person, including places, people, or situations. *(Normal for a while, but not long term - people avoid restaurants, streets, etc.)*
- **Emotional Numbness & Disbelief:** A strong sense of disbelief regarding the death, emotional numbness, and difficulty accepting the loss. *(Normal for a while, never get to point of being OK with it, but accepting it - cooperation with what is)*
- **Identity Disruption:** Feeling that a part of oneself has died, or losing a sense of identity. *(Clients who lose long term spouses, clients who were caregivers for many years)*
- **Functional Impairment:** Inability to function at work, school, or in social situations, and feeling that life is meaningless. *(Sometimes medication is needed at this time - me, Zoloft during divorce)*
- **Emotional Pain:** Intense anger, bitterness, sorrow, and an inability to experience positive emotions. *(Stuck in W/C/Sh)*

- This is STAYING in VICTIM MODE - can't access resilience here

When we have a loss, we ARE victims of a painful situation - but we don't have to STAY there

7 LEVELS OF RESILIENT ENERGY

Just need to get to level 3 - Responsible Person

We take responsibility by CHOOSING (let's return to digestion)

Digestion - Processing Our Grief

- Choose to look at what's on the plate - *not stuff our grief, avoid it or drown it (Genovese alcoholic)*
- Choose to pick it up - *look at it directly, from all sides*
- Choose to put it in our mouth - *create grief space, spend time with it, feel it (clients with quiet space, son's boots, journal)*
- Choose to chew - *grapple with the W/C/Sh, the guilt, the anger in order to release it*
- Choose to swallow - *come to acceptance (cooperation with what IS)*
- THEN allow digestion to work it's process - *let it take the time, don't rush it,*
 - *what to do WHILE I WAIT (productive and open) (R&S working on childhood stuff)*
- Allow the process to sort out:
 - what is waste (doesn't serve us)
 - what is nutrition (what heals us and enhances our life)
 - SO THAT WE *come through focused NOT on the death, but the life that was lived and shared*

When we process our grief, we can make lemonade

We don't get rid of the lemons/the pain of loss

- We dilute the bitterness by continuing to live life putting one foot in front of the other
- We sweeten life by focusing on living and making new memories
- While creating new purpose and meaning.

We hold space for the pain of the bitterness, the tedium of the blandness, AND the joy of the sweetness.

This is how we avoid PGD (prolonged grief disorder) and develop PTG (post traumatic growth)

In that way we honor what we've lost, and also honor the fullness of our life.