

How do I process *grief* and other big and sometimes cumbersome emotions?



Feel the feeling.
Stop.

Read that again. *Feel the feeling.*

This is the hardest part. When it comes to the uncomfortable and sometimes stabby feelings, we often want to shy away from them. But it's a little like trying to plug a hole in a leaky boat...eventually you're going to have to face it. Better to do it while it's small and manageable.

Check in with yourself at this point. What do you need to do, while you're experiencing whatever you're experiencing with this ball of emotion? Be gentle with yourself. If you need to nap, or cry, or yell, or run...do that.

Write. It. Out.

Yes, you hear this alllllll the time from basically every self-help anything. There's a reason for that.

Your writing guidelines:

- Write freeform - start with I feel ____ and then run from there.
- Set a timer, if you feel like you need a way to motivate yourself to do this. There's a lot you can get out in five minutes, and it's pretty hard to argue with sitting down and taking five minutes for you.
- After you feel "done" with writing, go back and read what you've read.
 - Is there anything that sticks out to you? Anything that makes questions come up for you?
 - Explore your feelings deeper. Notice what you've written and what quieter feelings arise from that.
 - There is often one large emotion (anger, anxiety, grief) that we are feeling, but the truth is that there are usually many other feelings that all get squashed together and then painted over with the one label.
 - What are those smaller emotions that are behind the big one?
 - Notice these, and get curious about them.
 - What has triggered this set of feelings? Can you pinpoint a moment? A conversation? A single thought?
 - Write about what you're noticing.
 - When you come up against "hard truths", take a moment and ask yourself "Is this true*?" It often is only partly true, or maybe not even actually true at all. A hard truth is more often than not, some negative self-talk dressed up and parading around as a fact.
 - When you feel wholly complete with this process, put the journal down. You'll know when you feel fully done with this each time you write. Some days are longer than others.

Bonus Round

Look for the lessons in the things you've uncovered about yourself. This is not intended to be part of your initial journaling. This is more of a few weeks to a few months in (seriously, big feelings take a good amount of time to process and really unknot).

- What patterns are you noticing?
- What self-talk can you change, to better support the life you'd like to live?
- What habits do you have that you weren't aware of before?
- What are you learning about yourself?
 - What surprises you in a good way?
 - What surprises you in ways you weren't expecting?
 - What changes would you like to start making?

Where can you find gratitude in the things you've gone through? Oh I know, I get it. You can roll your eyes at me if you must (I would too). But truly, if you can find something that deep down in your core you can *appreciate* about the gunk you've gone through, well the whole thing just feels a tiny bit better overall.

There you have it. This is the process (along with therapy, talking things out with loved ones, and a whole lot of sobbing on the kitchen floor - but this a huge part of the healing for me) that I used after my dad passed away. Big feelings are tough, and finding a way to see them "out loud" and revisit and explore what you're feeling can really be helpful.

*A note about "Is this true?" This is a question borrowed heavily by a lot of people from the lovely mind of Byron Katie. Byron Katie has written several books, and is quite well known within the coaching and self-help/self-guidance world. If you are unfamiliar with her, she's worth exploring. I had a hard time settling into her writing style of her books, but really enjoyed watching some recorded-live classes. I find her 4-questions to be invaluable, and they have helped me in a number of situations.



Wishing you grace and compassion,
Tress
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