Are you scared to stop grieving?

A gentle guide to understanding the fear of letting go...

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Hello and welcome,

I am so sorry you needed to download this guide. I know what that means. And I feel for you... deeply.

Losing someone you love is so hard and the pain and emptiness is so real. Please know that everything you feel is justified and totally okay.

There is so much I'd like to share with you. For now I want to keep this focused on the struggle between wanting to be part of life again and the part of you that feels like it just does not want to let go of grief.

Make yourself a nice cup of tea and start reading...

It will help you!
Hi,
I'm Silke Herwald.

Over the past eleven years I have helped hundreds of people through grief. In my private practices, online and in workshops and courses.

My husband thinks it’s weird how much I enjoy working with grief. But the truth is it fills my heart with so much joy when I notice people breathe easier, their face and body relaxes, the shoulders come down a bit and they may even and smile a real smile again.

I had the great honour of being the key speaker on “grief” at the 2019 AHA World Conference. There I had the wonderful opportunity to share my unique and gentle framework of helping people through grief with an international audience of Psychotherapists, Hypnotherapists, Counsellors, Psychologists and other Mental Health professionals.

I also deeply know what grief feels like from personal experience. I know in my heart that there is a better way.

At the end of this book you will find some more information about my personal story and about me.
Grief is an expression of love...
CHAPTER 3

A part of you does not want to stop grieving

In this chapter you will understand why that is the case and also why that is okay...
A part of you does not want to let go of the grief

The world has moved on. Others have gotten on with their lives. Which may even magnify that your world is still in a million pieces. Well meaning and loving others may even have told you that “it is time to let go” or “don’t you think it’s time you started to be part of life again…?”

And at times you may even feel like you’d want to participate in life again but… And it’s a big but!

Let me give you an example: Jane was sitting on the lounge in my office. She was tired all the time. Exhausted from all the battles and the tug between gut wrenching fear and little beacons of hope they had been through over the years. The thing that is not allowed to happen, happened. Her daughter had died in her early twenties.

Most days Jane had managed to drag herself out of bed to make breakfast for her husband and the two younger girls. She even managed a few fake smiles here and there. If anyone asked, she had learned to say that she was doing better. All she wanted to do was talk about Tania but she knew it made others uncomfortable, so she didn’t. She felt so alone.

Jane felt that all she had were the sad memories of the last years. Her heart wrenching grief and pain.

I asked her what she feared losing if she was to stop grieving...

Jane looked at me and said: “What if I lose the last memories of Tan…?? Or worse what if I forget my child…?”

We sat there for a while in silence. I let her ponder what she had just said and waited for what was next. Then Jane said with conviction: “No, I am not ready to let her go just yet. It’s weird but right now I need my grief like a warm blanket. And it feels like it’s the last thing that still connects me with her.”

There it was.

And it was in that moment that Jane’s journey through grief truly started.
CHAPTER 4

Common fears about stopping grieving

Some of these may seem familiar and you may be surprised by others...
Stopping grieving: Some of the most common fears...

You may rationally know that you will always love your loved one. That you will always remember them and always miss them. That there won’t be a day where you don’t think about them. They will always be a part of you and will always be in your heart (Maybe where that big gaping hole is at the moment...)

And still there is the fear of losing them completely.

Thinking about letting go of grief may feel scary, really uncomfortable and incredibly say. Because it may seem like:

- Not honouring them...
- Losing them completely...
- Forgetting your loved one...
- Did I really love them if I let go...
- Leaving your loved one behind...
- Not remembering your memories...
- Forgetting those precious last moments...
- Losing that last bit of love and connection...
- Not grieving the right way or not long enough...
- If I am not grieving anymore it means I didn't love them...
- Grief has become familiar and who am I without it...?
- I am leaving them behind if I move forward...
- What if I lose them completely?
- and much much more

Other people say they need their grief like a warm blanket, they can wrap around themselves. It's as if it's keeping their love and connection to their loved one close. It's important to keep your memories, as painful as these may be, close and safe from the world. Especially from those saying they should move on. At the moment, it may seem the only way to do that is by keeping the grief too. And that's okay.

=> Let me assure you this fear of losing even more is terrifying.

And it also is not true at all.

Imagine you could keep the love, your loved one and all the memories close and start healing your heart too...
These fears are real. Even though they are not true at all.

Having these thoughts is okay. You may have your own reasons why a part of you feels that it doesn’t want to let go of grief.

That is okay and here is why:

There is this part of you that wants to protect you. The most important part is that it wants to keep you safe from even more hurt.

It wants to make sure that:

- It protects you from more pain
- You do not forget your loved one
- You find the answers
- Keep the love
- You still feel connected
- Keep your memories
- Always remember them

And so much more...

This is your subconscious. Its job is to protect you. And it does that in the best way it currently knows how to.

And because the job of your subconscious mind is to protect you, it has some major objections to letting go. Anything that carries the slightest risk of losing even more or causing even more pain is an instant and definite: No way!

And unless we address these objections appropriately, your subconscious will not let go of the grief. Sometimes it can be that the more others want you to let go the more it holds on even tighter. Of course it doesn’t want to let go just yet.

In essence your subconscious does not want to let go in order to protect you.

Now I don’t want anyone resenting their own subconscious. So let’s find out a bit more.
CHAPTER 5

Your subconscious in grief

"The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of..." – Blaise Pascal
Your subconscious processes and grief

Your subconscious processes are all those thoughts and behaviours that happen automatically.

When you are driving home from work and suddenly you wonder “Oops... how did I get here...?” A part of you was off with the fairies, thinking about your loved one or what you need to do later in the day... While another part of you was doing the driving. This part of you was using the brakes and indicators, switching lanes and stopping at red lights. It was doing all of that without your logical conscious mind actively thinking about it. Auto pilot mode.

Probably the same when you are tying your shoelaces or are preparing breakfast. You do a lot of things automatically.

These autopilot moments are courtesy of your subconscious processes. Most of our subconscious, automatic processes work for us. Because it wouldn’t be useful if we needed to learn how to tie our shoelaces again every morning.

Here is the thing your subconscious processes are always trying to fulfil a positive intention for you.

Let me explain what that means. In grief your subconscious wants to make sure you don't get hurt even more. It wants to ensure you don't lose even more than what you already have. Because that would not be bearable. Hence it wants to make sure you keep the love, the memories and all that still connects you.

So it holds on. It holds on so tightly. And in doing so it holds onto your grief. So tightly. Because it has been led to believe that it’s the grief that is keeping you safe from more pain.

I can promise you by letting go of grief (maybe just a little) you will find a different, possibly even closer connection. You will remember more of the good times more spontaneously. Those memories may even make you smile a real little smile and give you a wonderful feeling.

You may even consciously know this but your subconscious doesn't know that just yet.

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Your heart has its reasons:

Once your subconscious processes realise that it is possible for you to keep the love and heal your heart, the real grieving and healing process can start.

After all: grief is an expression of love.

Grief touches every corner, every aspect of your life.

Grieving is and needs to be a largely subconscious process. You can not rationalise your way through it.

Hence those rational arguments you have with yourself, don’t really resolve anything. ("I know I should but...")

In the next chapter you will find some questions to help you when you are pondering whether it may be time to start moving forward a little.

"The heart has its reasons, which reason knows nothing of. We know the truth not only by the reason, but by the heart..."

- Blaise Pascal
And now...?  

...I hear you ask. Here is a little start:
Nobody likes being told what to do...

It's true isn't it?

I'm sure you have many loving and well meaning people trying to tell you what you should do. Helpful advice ranging from “Just go for a walk...” or “You need to get out more...” to “You need to meditate” etc… You may have even tried some of that.

I remember following that well-meaning advice and so I went along to a Yoga class. Wow! I had to use up all my (apparently, non existent) strength and will power trying not to curl up in a sobbing mess on my mat... A box of tissues to the rescue and a quietly muttered 'sorry' as I dragged myself back to the safety of my car and grief.

So yes, many of the well-meaning 'you shoulds' don't really work.

What works a lot better is asking questions of your own mind.

But you need to make sure these are the right questions!

Because your mind will always answer the exact questions, you ask it.

If you ask "Why does this hurt so much...?" Your mind will search for answers and come up with reasons why this hurts so much. Which may or may not be useful depending on the situation you are in. Trust me it is not a good question to ask yourself when you are in a meeting or waiting at the check out counter...

So when you are in a meeting you might want to have some different questions ready so you can pull yourself out, if need be.

Here are some that work time and time again. Especially when you have thought about these previously so the answers come pretty automatically.
CHAPTER 7

The questions

Your mind answers the questions it gets asked...
Some simple questions you might like to consider...

Remember my client Jane? Who, like so many others, was so scared about what she would lose when she started to let go just a little…?

From everything Jane had told me I knew that her daughter Tania had loved life. Tan was a positive young woman, always looking for the silver lining. She was just someone everyone loved being around. Whether it was the nurses and doctors who had cared for her or someone she met at the shops.

I said to Jane: “What would happen if you could keep the essence of Tania, her memory, the love you shared, your memories with her and all that as close as you need to…?”

I continued: “You know, letting go off grief is not the same as letting go of Tan…”

A deep silence ensued as Jane sat there, pondering what just happened.

When Jane finally looked up at me, I could see a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

I looked Jane straight in the eyes and said: “Now…. tell me… What would Tania want for you…?”

Jane sat there, pondering, maybe even for the first time, what her beloved daughter would want for her mum. The mum she had loved so much.

After I waited a long time, I said: "Would Tan want you to suffer and be in this much pain...?"

With great passion Jane shook her head: "No, no, she wouldn’t. She’d hate to see me like this. Tan loved life and she always just wanted everyone to be happy..."

Jane had almost has the hint of a smile when she said: “Tan would laugh at me and say “Mumma-bear... stop being so ungrateful... "

That was the moment Jane’s healing journey truly started.

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Two sets of questions:

Your mind and brain answer the questions it gets asked. It's a bit like google search: The search results you get vary greatly depending on what you type in.

So the more we ask our mind questions along the lines of: "Why is this so hard...?", "When will it stop hurting so much...?", "Why do I feel so lonely even when I am with people...?", "Why do I feel so hollow and empty...?", "Why did I not say or do xyz..."

When we ask these types of questions our brain will be on a mission to deliver the answers. Which is nice of the brain but in the long run...? Does it actually help you...? Or do you end up running around in circles and just wanting to pull the sheets over your head...?

So we need to ask better questions!

On the next couple of pages you will two different types of questions. They are designed to help your mind and brain channel your thoughts into a different way of thinking and processing your loss.

**With all questions:**

Please pick one of these questions and just ponder them...

Before you ask one of these questions maybe just take a moment to relax and turn inward...

And after you ask each question inside, relax and notice what response you get back... There is no need to censor it, just let come up whatever comes up. No matter how irrational it may seem. For a moment just put that logical, rational part of you aside...

Your subconscious is a bit like a messenger. And this messenger knows that you are home and it needs to deliver a message. So it knocks on the door but you ignore it. So what is it going to do? Well, it needs to get the message across. Hence it will knock louder and louder and louder. Until you finally open the door and receive the message. Because whatever comes up needs to get addressed.
The first set of questions:

1. What are you scared of losing if you were to stop grieving?

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___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________

2. What is stopping you from letting go a little...?

___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
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___________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________
Second set of questions:

1. What would your loved one want for you...? How would they want you to live...?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. How do YOU want to remember your loved one?
   (It is okay to think about yourself and what you would like...)

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

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Final words

You can journal on one of these questions and write down your answers...

Contemplate one while your out for a walk, meditate on it or just consider one while making dinner…

There really is no right or wrong way of asking these questions. These questions will be an ongoing thing.

Many of my previous clients have reported how one of these questions pulled them out of a downward spiral in an important meeting or how they managed to take themselves for a walk on the beach despite just wanting to stay in bed.

It's probably best to read this little guide a few times because there is a lot of information in here.

And every time you do you may understand my words slightly differently.

Thank you for your time!

PS: If you’re curious you will find some more information about me on the next couple of pages.

Yours in hope and wellbeing
Silke

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“No matter how much suffering you went through, you never wanted to let go of those memories!”
About Silke

Over the past eleven years I have helped hundreds of people through grief. Clients have seen me in my private practices in Brisbane & on the Sunshine Coast and worldwide online. Both privately and in workshops and courses.

My husband thinks it’s weird how much I enjoy working with grief. But the truth is it fills my heart with so much joy when I notice people breathe easier, their face and body relaxes, the shoulders come down a bit and they may even and smile a real smile again.

I had been working with the bereaved (and other deeply traumatised) clients for about 9 years when my work got a whole different dimension: It was 2.18 am when the phone rang. I heard the terror in my dad’s gentle voice, my mum’s muffled scream and my brother-in-law’s sobbing on the other end of the phone.

My parents had just lost their child and my brother-in-law his wife of 25 years to cancer. The thing that wasn’t allowed to happen, happened.

After having just lost my soul sister, I could not bear the thought of losing one of my parents or my brother-in-law to their grief. In my practice I had seen it too many times: after the death of a child, the parents’ life was lost to grief, depression or alcohol.

So I had to learn even more about how our subconscious mind deals with grief. Even if some of it was, admittedly, for purely selfish reasons. I wanted and needed my parents to live life and eventually see the sun again...
I knew that the processes I had been using for all these years with my clients worked. Now I got to experience what it was like to go through these processes, questions and exercises myself. I got the first hand experience where they needed refining and adjusting. At the same rate that pain and grief eased, more and happier memories started to surface automatically and these made me smile again...

I am happy to report that we are all okay. We are all joyful to experience joy. We laugh, our world is full of colour again and we all remember her, we talk about her, we laugh. There is nothing forced or weird about it. At Christmas there sometimes is a tear and that is okay too as that moment passes quickly and we remember her in a good way again.

So I knew I had found this very gentle and unique way of guiding people through grief subconsciously.

As the key speaker on “grief” at the 2019 AHA World Conference, I had the wonderful opportunity to present “From grief to love” to an international audience of Psychotherapists, Hypnotherapists, Counsellors, Psychologists and other Mental Health professionals.

I also train others professionals in these incredibly effective techniques so they can help their clients through grief in a profound way.

Also I am a Master Clinical Hypnotherapist, Master Practitioner of NLP and a Clinical Supervisor for the Australian Society of Clinical Hypnotherapists and a Clinical Supervisor for the Australian Hypnotherapists Association and a “dog lover”.

I live with my husband and two dogs on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, Australia. As I am writing this my almost 15 year old Border Collie girl is sleeping at my feet. I am fully aware that we are very much on borrowed time. Every day with her is a bonus. I am grieving her while she is still with me. In some weird way it allows me to be even more fully connected to her right now. The other little Border Collie just turned one and is full of life. Which reminds me that it is all part of life.

And I trust that this little booklet is useful to you. So, I invite you to join me on a journey... Your own unique journey through grief. And you will get through this!

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