

Bereavement news for people living with grief



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Redefining 'okay' after loss

Excerpts from article by Eleanor Haley

What does “being okay” after loss mean to you? Not happy or healed, not successful or self-actualized — but okay.

A sense of okayness might be hard to envision for people feeling ravaged by the intense emotions and distressing thoughts of acute grief. When the only world that makes sense feels destroyed by a significant loss, it can be difficult to imagine that any reality other than the one you had before could ever feel acceptable.

But this is precisely why okayness is important to consider. Otherwise, it can continue to feel impossible — as though it’s something you’ll only find when you’ve either “healed” from your grief or finished building a time machine to take you back to before your loss — whichever happens first.

When we think this way, we may find ourselves:

Focusing on the wrong things - trying to “go back to normal” when that version of ourselves has been forever changed.

Judging ourselves by impossible standards - feeling like we need to work towards “getting over” or “resolving” our grief.

Viewing “okay,” “happy,” or “healed” as final destinations - buying into the idea that we battle through grief to get to the other side, where we finally feel better — overlooking the reality that emotions and experiences like joy, sadness, peace, and pain are transient, often overlapping states.

Being a grieving human in the world means constantly cycling between ups, downs, and in-betweens. Positive states like happiness or fulfillment are not endpoints; they’re passing states just like sadness. The most realistic way to live post-loss is to recognize that these seemingly opposite feelings will, at some point, coexist.

So what does a more realistic sense of “okayness” look like to you? One that recognizes loss has left an unfillable hole and that grief has changed you and the way you see the world. One that acknowledges life is a series of ups and downs and that, when you’re grieving, the potential for setbacks and sad days always exists. One that is reasonable, but not impossible.

We’re not asking you to be this — or any other form of okay — right now. Only to hope that there’s a version of it that makes sense in your life after loss.



Create a Dopamine Menu

Adapted from 'Dopamine Menu: how to boost happiness and make one that works for you' by Calissa Kirilenko, updated by Katherin Chang

Self-care is an especially crucial (and often difficult) practice while grieving. In honor of National Wellness Month, try this method of organizing feel-good activities like a restaurant menu, with each item serving as your own mood boosting treat.

What is a Dopamine Menu?

A dopamine menu is a curated list of healthy habits and activities designed to naturally elevate your dopamine levels and make you feel pleasure, motivation, and reward. The idea behind a dopamine menu is to provide an actionable and sustainable approach to improve your mood and prioritize your mental well-being. And by creating your own personal dopamine menu, you can pinpoint what actually brings you joy and fulfillment and it can serve as a friendly nudge to choose those activities over alternatives that aren't as rewarding.

How to create your own personalized Dopamine Menu

The most important part of creating a dopamine menu is catering to you and your needs. **Start by writing down things that bring you joy**—it could be your favorite travel destination, a cup of coffee, a song, dancing, or shopping. Next, determine which items are realistic for your current lifestyle and separate them into the appropriate menu categories. Add in and remove activities as you go, write them out in a colorful notebook, and place your menu somewhere out in the open where you'll always see it. The next time you're feeling stuck, bored, or uninspired, refer to your dopamine menu, choose something off your list, and get the dopamine fix your brain and body need.

Appetizers (5 minutes or less)

- Jumping jacks
- A quick meditation or breathing exercise
- Turn on music and dance
- Make a cup of coffee or tea
- Cuddle a pet
- Make your bed
- Stretch
- Stand outside in the sun

Entrees (1 hour or more)

- Go for a long walk
- Take a workout class
- Cook a meal you love
- Watch a movie or read a book

Sides (add-in as you can)

- Listen to a podcast/music/audiobook
- Light a candle
- Call a friend
- Doodle/draw

Desserts (to cope in moderation)

- Buy a sweet treat
- Scroll social media
- Order takeout
- Go shopping

Specials (big events/special occasion)

- Book a vacation
- Go to a concert, play, or comedy show
- Take a class
- Do a random act of kindness/pay it forward/volunteer

Visit henryford.com/services/at-home/hospice/support to download a guide to creating your own menu

Start Close In

by David Whyte

Start close in,
don't take the second step or the third,
start with the first thing close in,
the step you don't want to take.

Start with the ground you know,
the pale ground beneath your feet,
your own way to begin the conversation.

Start with your own question,
give up on other people's questions,
don't let them smother something simple.

To hear another's voice,
follow your own voice,
wait until that voice becomes an intimate
private ear that can really listen to another.

Start right now take a small step
you can call your own,
don't follow someone else's heroics,
be humble and focused,
start close in,
don't mistake that other for your own.

Start close in,
don't take the second step or the third,
start with the first thing close in,
the step you don't want to take.



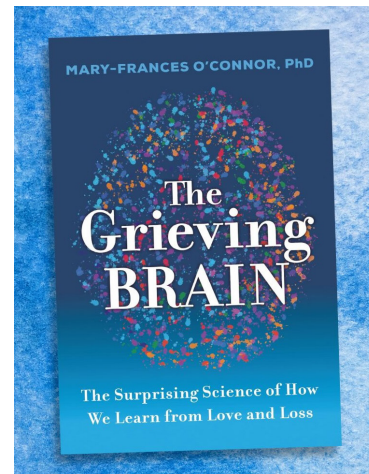
Staff picks

Each month one of our staff members shares a resource they find valuable in the grief space.

This month's pick

The Grieving Brain: the surprising science of how we learn from love and loss

by Mary-Frances O'Connor, Ph.D.



A renowned grief expert and neuroscientist shares groundbreaking discoveries about what happens in our brain when we grieve, providing a new paradigm for understanding love, loss, and learning.

Recommended by

Megan B.

Why I loved it

Loss and grief can throw you into a state of bewilderment, a place where suddenly everything is unknown. This book shines a light on what's happening to your brain before/ during/after the grief process and why you may be feeling the way you do.

You might enjoy if

You like rational explanations for feelings with real life examples. Knowing the bodily mechanisms behind emotions has helped me to be more accepting and understanding of my experiences with grief.

2026 Bereavement support groups

July-December

2nd Tuesday of the month

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Location:

Virtual via Teams

Monthly: 7/14, 8/11, 9/8, 10/13, 11/10, 12/8

3rd Wednesday of the month

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Location:

Henry Ford Macomb Hospital
Medical Pavilion – 4th Floor Meeting Room #6
16151 19 Mile Road
Clinton Township, MI 48038

Monthly: 7/15, 8/19, 9/16, 10/21, 11/18, 12/16

4th Tuesday of the month

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Location:

Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital
Conference Room (LDRP2)
6777 West Maple Road
West Bloomfield, MI 48322

Monthly: 7/28, 8/25, 9/22, 10/27, 11/24, 12/22

SandCastles children's grief support program

SandCastles offers services in Oakland, Macomb and Wayne counties, as well as virtually. Call **313.771.7005** or email sandcastles@hfhs.org for more information.



Henry Ford Hospice bereavement services

Offers bereavement support to hospice family members, caregivers and anyone in the community 18 years or older who has experienced the loss of a loved one.

Program offerings include:

- Periodic phone calls
- Monthly newsletters
- Support groups
- Grief education
- One-on-one support is determined on an individual basis.
- Memorial services
- Community resources/referrals

In general, services last for 13 months, but support can be extended or discontinued. These services are free, with no cost to you.

To learn more about these services please call **586.276.9570** or go to henryford.com/services/at-home/hospice/support.

Henry Ford provides qualified interpreters and other aids and services for the deaf and hard of hearing at no cost.

To request assistance, call Henry Ford bereavement services at 586.276.9570.

A three-day notice is required when requesting an interpreter.