

Unconventional Grief After Narcissistic Abuse

Most people assume there is only one type of grief, the grief that happens when someone you love dies, but there are other types as well.

People also can grieve when they move, get a divorce or lose a job. There is also something known as anticipatory grief, which happens when you know someone is dying.

Unconventional grief is different. It is grief that is triggered by unique circumstances. I experienced it when learning about the many new limitations because of how damaged my brain & body were after surviving Carbon Monoxide Poisoning. It also can happen when someone is diagnosed with mental illness or when a loved one has a substance abuse problem. Unconventional grief also can happen as a result of trauma & abuse.

When you grow up with a narcissistic parent or two, & you finally learn about narcissism, although it is a great thing, it can trigger grief. Suddenly you realize that you aren't the problem, which is certainly good news of course, but realizing what your parent was is difficult & painful to accept. It hurts that the one person who was supposed to love you unconditionally didn't, & lacks the ability to do so. You also realize how much your parent took from you, such as your childhood & self-esteem. And, it suddenly hits you that there is no hope for your relationship. Prior to learning about Narcissistic Personality Disorder, most people have some hope that one day their parent will realize what she did, apologize & change for the better. Learning about NPD squelches that hope completely. That is a tough pill to swallow!

Facing these ugly truths absolutely can cause a person to grieve, & it's extremely painful. It's also difficult to understand because of the limited view of grief that most people have. How can you grieve when the person in question is still alive?! Well, it's surprisingly easy to do actually.

When my father died in October, 2017, I didn't cry. I cry easily especially when losing someone I love, but I didn't cry. I barely felt sad since he's been gone. No doubt any of my family that may be reading this thinks it's because I'm a cold, evil person, but that isn't the case. It's because I grieved him enough when he was alive that his death didn't have a very profound effect on me. And you know something? Many other adult children of narcissistic parents I've spoken with have said that they felt the same exact thing when their parent died.

Unconventional grief can be incredibly difficult, but you can get through it.

Pray often. You will need God's wisdom, guidance & comfort to get through this.

Don't judge your emotions. Accept them. Examine them without judgment or criticism. Feel them. Pray, talk or write about them to cope with them.

Anger is an especially common part of this sort of grief. If you feel a lot of anger, it's normal! I know, you probably grew up like most of us with narcissistic parents did, believing you aren't allowed to be angry. Stop that now! Face it & deal with your feelings. The pain will lose its power over you if you face it.

You also may start to remember only the good times. They are good to remember, but don't forget the bad as well. Embrace the good & heal from the bad.

Write in a journal. Writing is very cathartic, plus it will help you to have documentation. You may even decide that you enjoy writing, & opt to start a blog or write a book.

Find online support groups & websites. Learning that others are experiencing similar things to you is very helpful.

Don't expect this grief to end entirely. It will get better, but it may never end entirely. It's like losing a loved one- you grieve most right after the person died, but even many years later, the pain is still there, just not as intense as it was at first.

If you're experiencing unconventional grief, know you aren't alone. You can survive this! It will take hard work & won't be easy, but you can do it!