

Be the Hero or Heroine of Your Own Grief Journey

My husband died in November of 2021, and like so many of you, I was thrust into a world I didn't recognize. In the midst of the heartbreak, I made a promise to myself: I would walk this rocky journey as the heroine of my own story. One challenge at a time, one breath at a time, I would keep moving forward. I didn't have all the answers—but I was determined to come through this with strength and purpose through all the emotions, confusion, and long nights. You can too!

Today, I'm studying with Dr. David Kessler, who co-authored books with the legendary Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross. His work has helped me immensely—and like me, he found inspiration in Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey. In fact, he weaves it beautifully into his workbook, *Finding Meaning*, which we now use in our grief groups.

When you lose someone, you love, your world turns upside down. The routines, dreams, and comfort of the familiar vanish, and you're left standing in a world you no longer recognize.

This is grief. But believe it or not, your grief story is also a hero's journey.

Joseph Campbell, the well-known mythologist, taught that every hero faces a life-changing challenge, travels through hardship, and eventually emerges transformed. You didn't choose this journey—but you've been forced to walk it. Not because you are being punished, but because you have loved deeply—and now must find a way forward with that love still in your heart.

Let's walk through how Campbell's "Hero's Journey" can help you understand your grief—and move toward healing.



1. **The Ordinary World: Before the Loss**—Before loss, life felt familiar. You had routines, hopes, and a future you could picture. It's important to honor that life. It shaped the love you still carry.
2. **The Call to Adventure: The Moment Everything Changes**—The "call" came the moment your loved one died. It wasn't a call you wanted, but it pulled you into a wilderness of grief. Nothing feels the same—and yet, here you are. Still breathing. Still showing up. Hating it. Crying your way through.
3. **Refusal of the Call: Wanting to Stay in the Past**—It's natural to resist. You might think, "If only..." or "This can't be real." You may feel stuck between denial and disbelief. That's not weakness, it's your heart trying to make sense of the pain.
4. **Meeting the Mentor: Finding Support and Making Choices**—Every hero finds mentors. For you, this might be a grief counselor, a support group, a trusted friend, or a spiritual leader. Grief groups, in

particular, can help you feel understood, supported, and less alone.

Still, even with support, you have to make choices. Will you isolate or reach out? Numb your pain or feel it? Harden or stay open-hearted? Self-sabotage is common—getting stuck, avoiding emotions, or retreating into blame.

But there is hope: healing is possible when you truly mourn by expressing your feelings. Most people need at least two full years to move through early grief. You don't have to rush—but you do have to keep walking. Baby steps.

5. **Crossing the First Threshold: Saying Yes to Healing**—At some point, you realize: “I can’t go back to how life was. But maybe, I can move forward.” Attending a grief group, speaking your loved one’s name again, or laughing without guilt—these are threshold moments.
6. **Tests, Allies, and Enemies: Day-to-Day Challenges**—You’ll face tests: birthdays, holidays, random days that trigger memories. You’ll also meet allies—people who say, “Me too.” Enemies include isolation, despair, and the voice that says, “You should be over this by now.” Every small act of honesty and connection is a win.
7. **The Inmost Cave and Ordeal: Facing the Pain**—This is the hardest and longest part. And you will need to surrender to it. It can feel like a roller coaster of emotions. Eventually, you’ll have to sit with the deepest parts of your sorrow—the raw longing, the questions that have no answers. These moments can feel like emotional free fall. But even as you cry or collapse, you are healing. Take care of yourself! Don’t give up! I’m here if you need me because after a while friends and family will tell you to “get over it” etc. Our group will give you the encouragement you need. I promise!

8. **The Reward: Glimmers of Light**—

After the darkest moments, small gifts appear. A moment of laughter. A kind memory. The ability to feel joy and sorrow together. These are signs your heart is still alive.

9. **The Road Back and Resurrection: Rebuilding a Life**—

You begin to re-engage with life—not as you were, but as someone changed. You carry both your grief and your growth. You are becoming someone wiser, softer, and stronger.

10. **Return with the Elixir: Sharing What You’ve Learned**—

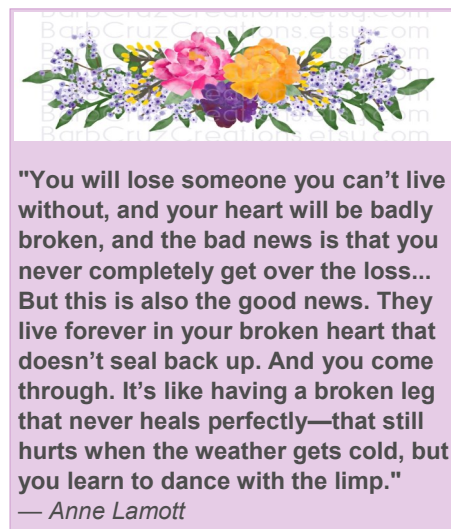
Now you carry a kind of wisdom. You can sit with someone else’s pain. You know how to live with love and longing side by side. This is your gift to the world.

You didn’t ask for this journey—but you are walking it. You are becoming the hero or heroine of your own story.

This summer, consider joining our grief group. We’ll be healing using David Kessler’s *Finding Meaning workbook*. You’ll find insight, hope, and others who walk this path too.

We meet Thursdays at Cabin Coffee (2040 Kimball Ave, Waterloo) from 1:00–2:30, and at Locke Tower Park (4140 Kimball Ave) from 5:00–6:30. No need to sign up—just drop in. You are always welcome.

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Nature Helps Heal Your Heart

This summer, get outside! Take a drive, enjoy ice cream, enjoy flowers, rivers and lakes.

"And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again..."

— F. Scott Fitzgerald



Let summer remind you that even after loss, something within you is slowly beginning again.

Be the Hero/Heroine of Your Grief Journey

This summer is the perfect time to join our Grief Support Groups!

We will be exploring **Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey** alongside **David Kessler's Finding Meaning Workbook** to help you honor your loved one's memory while discovering new hope for the future.

Meeting Times and Locations are listed in this newsletter.

No registration is required, **just drop in and check it out.**

You will find grace, compassion, and insights to help heal your grief. **We are here for you.**

WHAT TO SAY? A CARD IN THE MAIL

"When we honestly ask ourselves which person in our lives means the most to us, we often find that those who, instead of giving advice, solutions, or cures, have chosen to share our pain and touch our wounds with a warm and tender hand."
-- Henri Nouwen

In a world of email, texts, and posts, it is easy to forget the power of a handwritten note. I think of this as I pick up the mail and sort through flyers, bills, and newsletters. My heart leaps when I see a friend's return address. Her personal encouragement is like pure gold.

There's something about a personal note, isn't there? Consider sharing your memories about your loved one. Here are some prompts to get you started:

I always appreciated his...

I remember when...

I will miss...

I remember the last time we were together...

When we were kids, she would...

Please know...

She made me laugh when...

He made a difference by...

I am thankful for...

Bring your warm and tender hand to write the memories that bring tears and joy to the bereaved. He/she needs to know months after the funeral that you care. Help children send their pictures and notes, too. **Snail mail is good.** Buy some stamps. You'll be glad you did. ©VickiJolene Lindley Reece

"What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness?"

—John Steinbeck

Grief has shaped your soul. Let the sun find your aching places and warm them gently

In This Issue

- Be the Hero or Heroine of Your Own Grief Journey
- Nature Helps Heal Your Heart
- What to Say? A Card in the Mail
- Dates of Continuous Care Support Group Meetings

JOIN US every week!

2025 Continuous Care Support



Grief Support Daytime Meetings

TIME: 1:00—2:30 p.m.

LOCATION:
Cabin Coffee, 2040 Kimball,
Waterloo

Grief Support Evening Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:
Locke at Tower Park,
4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Thursday Dates:

July	3, 10, 17, 24, 31
Aug	7, 14, 21, 28
Sept	4, 11, 18, 25

Suicide Grief Support Meetings

TIME: 5:00-6:30 p.m.

LOCATION:
Locke at Tower Park,
4140 Kimball, Waterloo

Biweekly Wednesday Dates:

July	2, 16
Aug	6, 20
Sept	3, 17

*Please feel free to bring a friend. All groups are free & open to the public!
Call with questions 319-233-6138.*

WEATHER ALERT: If schools are closed due to weather, the meeting is canceled.

Want to be on our e-mailing list? Call and we'll add you to our quarterly newsletter list.

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