

Unexpressed Grief

The Seed of Bitterness

In my curious and earnest search to get to the depths of grief and understand it I have stumbled across a realization the other day that I am going to share with y'all. It is in two pieces.

Piece one is a realization I have already shared with you, grief and love are twins, inseparably so. You cannot have one without the other.

Piece two is grief can either be expressed or suppressed, we often refer to this suppression as depression. When grief is expressed and acknowledged or validated, it is released and the one grieving feels a sense of relief. They move forward in their grieving and ultimately reinvent themselves and make meaning of the loss with the ongoing support of others.

However, if the same grief is suppressed it gets tucked away in the body and does not see the light of day. This hidden grief lives in the shadows and in doing so becomes the energetic foundation for bitterness. Here is the definition;

bit-ter-ness

noun

- 1. Sharpness of taste; lack of sweetness.*
- 2. Anger and disappointment at being untreated unfairly; resentment.*



This shadow side of grief leaks out in sharp and hurtful ways often in the form of mental or emotional abuse. In extreme case it leaks out as physical abuse or substance abuse. This leaking is unconscious; the one being sharp or resentful or abusive would not even link their behavior to unexpressed grief. Neither do those experiencing the bitterness. We all collectively miss it and do not see it as grief's shadow side in operation.

This resentment is a complex, multilayered emotion that has been described as a mixture of disappointment, disgust, anger, and fear by many psychologists. Yet, in my experience they are missing the deeper issue that lies underneath this bitterness – unexpressed grief.

When I dig more deeply into some of the emotions linked to resentment what I see over and over again is profound sadness. A sadness that is a direct result of death, change, and loss. A sorrow that is dying for the light of day; a grief that is longing to be shared acknowledge and set free.

-Stephen Garrett, MA