

Ep #15: How Journaling Transforms Grief



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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Did you know that there's a simple yet powerful tool to lift your spirits when life throws its toughest punches? In a fascinating study back in 2006, a bunch of savvy young adults were given a challenge. Write about something stress packed for just 15 minutes. Now brace yourself for the plot twists. Those who pour their feelings onto paper felt like a weight had been lifted. Less depression, less anxiety, and less anger just from jotting down their thoughts.

Now let's be real writing about the heavy stuff like the heart wrenching loss of a loved one might sound challenging. But what if I told you that writing can be your secret weapon to navigate through those stormy emotions? Join me as I spill the beans on my personal coping strategy, a journaling journey that transformed grief into gratitude. Trust me, you won't want to miss this insightful and uplifting episode. Stay tuned and let's discover the power of healing through the words together.

Welcome to *Overcoming Grief*, a show for women experiencing profound grief and looking for support in healing and transforming their lives. If you are ready to heal after loss, create a new self-identity, take responsibility to do the hard things, and get massive results in your life, this show is for you. Now, here's your host, Master Grief and Life Coach, Sandy Linda.

Hello, wonderful listeners across the globe. How are we doing today? Well today in the U.S. it's Thanksgiving Day. For others, it's just another day, possibly a harvest festival day for some. Before I get into our discussion, I want to remind you of an upcoming webinar hosted by my good friend Scott and me.

Join us on November 29, 2023 for a heartfelt webinar on holiday grief, navigating the holidays with compassion. Now, the holiday season can be a challenging time for those coping with grief. We're here to provide a safe judgment free space for you to share, learn, and heal.

So what do you expect on this webinar? You're going to get expert guidance on navigating grief during the holidays, heartfelt conversations and shared experiences, strategies for self-care and resilience, and a supportive community that understands your journey. Limited spots are available, only 20, for an intimate judgment free zone where we'll share insights, tools, and support.

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This isn't your typical webinar. It's a space to connect, heal, and find hope together. Seats are filling up fast. Secure your spots before they vanish. Let's turn grief into a journey of strength and resilience. The registration link can be found in the show notes. Together we'll light a candle in the darkness. I look forward to meeting you all at this event. So if you are dreading the holidays, come join us on this holiday grief webinar event.

Today we're diving into a healing and transformative topic, journaling. I'm here to shed light on how this simple practice can be your companion through grief and a spotlight of healing, especially as we navigate the holiday season. Last week, we explored the dance between gratitude and grief. I asked a question on can gratitude shield us from the storms of sorrow, grief, and anger? The answer was not exactly, but it's like a gentle breeze that soothes our emotions offering a broader perspective on the beauty and purpose of life.

Now, I get it. Finding gratitude in the middle of the ache of a loved one's absence, especially during Thanksgiving, can feel like a brutal task. But here's the thing. Us grievers, we're known for doing the hard stuff. Today let's talk about expressive writing and how journaling operates on two levels: your feelings and thoughts. I understand that putting pen to paper about painful experiences might seem intimidating. So if you're hesitating or need that extra push, stick around. I'll share why this practice is valuable and worth every bit of your time and effort.

Let's venture on this journaling journey together. Your path to healing awaits. Long before scientists started peering at diaries through microscopes, folks were writing away in them. Guess what? It turns out that putting pen to paper has some serious perks. Recent studies by Dr. Pennebaker and Dr. Smith spill the ink on the benefits of jotting down those deep thoughts and feelings. According to their research, writing about tough, traumatic stuff can lead to a glorious state of letting go.

Here's the scoop. Participants in their study underwent a writing transformation. As they poured out the nitty gritty details of their emotional struggles, the floodgates opened. The pen danced faster. The handwriting might have switched from print to script writing, and there was a whole symphony of slants,

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pressures, and cross out. All signs of writing as a soothing release. It's like giving those pent up emotions a one way ticket to relief.

Now here's a quick reality check. To ensure your journaling doesn't do a 180 on you, keep that confidence high and stay positive. Let it all out. Analyze those thoughts and trust in your ability to navigate the journey. Let's talk about the lonely side of grief that's never noticed.

Only those who've been there really get it, like myself. Your friends mean well, but let's face it, they've got their own Netflix dramas to binge watch. They might not always be up for another round of our sob fest stories. Now here's the plot twist, writing. When everything else seems like it's missing the mark, putting pen to paper somehow becomes a lifeline. It's like a comforting companion, offering comfort and a dash of relief when nothing else quite hits the spot.

So what's the magic behind the ordinary diary? Brace yourself. It's a double whammy, operating on two levels, our feelings and our thoughts. First off, it's like our own little emotion confessional. Instead of shoving those feelings into the emotional closet, which, let's face it, is as harmful as a tofu flavor cupcake. For those who love tofu, please forgive me.

We all have that stash of secret pain or shame lurking around in our mental attic. Right? Well imagine turning that chaos into a neatly typed document, like a therapy session but without an awkward couch. I want to take you on a journey through the power of journaling and how it became a bonfire of light for me in the storm of grief.

It all started with my sister. After her passing, I found a hidden treasure of journals in her apartment when we were ready to move her stuff out. She had a collection dating back to when she was just 16. As I flipped through the pages, I realized she poured her heart out on paper. Angry rants, messy cross outs, and rewritten passages. A raw documentation of her emotions. It was like she unleashed her feelings with every stroke of the pen.

Inspired by her, I decided to give it a shot. You see, grief had wrapped itself around me, and I was struggling to find an outlet. Therapy sessions helped, but there was something about the act of writing that felt different. Angry and mad, I

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started my own journaling sessions. Fast forward and those journals became my sanctuary. They taught me to organize the chaos in my head, transforming my thoughts and feelings into tangible words on paper.

It was therapeutic and a way to give my grief a voice. They weren't just journals. They were my anchor. My refuge in the face of the storm. Our culture often shies away from grief, leaving us fumbling for words, drowning in cliches that do little to ease the pain.

Now, before I experienced loss, I too was clueless about a way to say to someone in grief I've been there. But through journaling I found a way to navigate the uncharted waters of grief. Today I want to share this powerful tool with you hoping it becomes a guiding light in your journey as it did in mine.

To those facing their first Thanksgiving without the familiar warmth of family, know that your emotions are heard, felt, and understood. I've been there, and I want to share a piece of my journey with you. During my first Thanksgiving Day without my family, back in 2016 I welcomed an open invitation to my former financial adviser to join with his family.

While the gesture was kind, the reality was messy. I was people pleasing, right? Emotionally I was in pain, and watching strangers cheering at family gatherings felt like witnessing a heartbreaking movie scene. I screamed and cried at home fighting with the deep loneliness that holidays can bring. That experience was tough, and I craved the guidance on navigating the holidays in the middle of grief.

Over the years, my approach to holidays has evolved. On a recent Thanksgiving, I spent the day walking five miles along the boardwalk with a furry companion. I was pet sitting. Later I cozy up with a classic holiday film, Jim Carey's rendition *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*. Have you ever seen that movie? That movie is hilarious. That really gave me a chance to understand that.

We should have created a list because there's a scene in there where he has a list of the nerve of the Who's trying to invite me on short notice. He wrote a list of 1:00 wallow in self-pity. 4:30 stare in the abyss, and 5:00 solve world hunger and

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tell no one. I mean this scene is so fascinating to me. If you ever saw it, it's just a holiday to myself. A comedy relief for me.

I want to continue on this podcast after the little How the Grinch Stole Christmas, but those struggling to communicate their unique grief journey to well-meaning family members. My advice is simple. Be honest. It's okay to say no and express a desire for privacy.

The reason why I say that is I need you to take a moment with pen and paper to express your thoughts and feelings about spending the holidays. Embracing your own pace and finding comfort in solitude can be a powerful way to navigate the complexities of grief during the holiday season. It's such a game changer.

So here are three simple yet transformative ways to make journaling a vital part of your healing process. Number one, keep your journal close. In the unpredictable journey of grief, emotions can surge unexpectedly whether alone in the airport or in a quiet hospital waiting room. I found incredible comfort in having my journal always within reach. The ability to jot down my thoughts and feelings provided a sense of relief.

Number two, shower thoughts. Some of you may have called it a brain dump. I call it shower thoughts. Something fancy for me. Those unexpected and often profound reflections that come to us during moments of privacy can be channeled into your journaling routine. Capture these insights on paper, allowing the free flow of ideas without the rules of structure. Much like the cleansing effect of a shower. This practice offers a mental cleanse, providing clarity and discovering hidden emotions.

Number three, craft a gratitude list. Among the overwhelming sea of grief, crafting a gratitude list became my anchor to positivity. It's a powerful exercise that helps shift the focus to what is positive when happiness seems unavailable. Listing things I was grateful for became a short redemption from overwhelming negativity offering a glimpse of light in the darkest moments.

Ever wonder about the magic that happens when we truly let go? Researchers exploring the realms of the letting go experience found something fascinating. When people enter a hypnotic state, it's like a temporary escape from

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self-consciousness and the weight of daily hassles. It's a moment to let loose and explore yourself without worrying about social norms, people pleasing, or worrying about what can I do? It's you offering a unique opportunity to embrace the liberating journey of self-discovery and finding freedom.

Imagine the potential when you bring this letting go spirit into your journaling during grief. A powerful space where inhibitions fade, and your thoughts flow freely. So let go. No more of those people pleasing, protecting people's feelings. How about protecting your feelings so that you can heal through your grief?

So whether you're navigating the holiday season, facing the first Thanksgiving without a loved one, or simply seeking solace in your grief journey, know that you are not alone. Journaling can be your silent confidant, your voice in the storm, and your path to healing.

Join me on this journey where grief transforms into gratitude, one written word at a time. Do yourself a little favor. Do you have 15 minutes of your time to shower your thoughts? Until next time, stay resilient, stay compassionate, and let the healing power of words guide you. Thank you so much for listening, and have a great day. Bye.

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It doesn't have to be a five star rating. Although I sure hope you love the show. I want your honest feedback so I can create an awesome podcast that provides tons of value on the show. Visit www.sandy linda.com/podcastlaunch for step by step instructions on how to follow rate and review.

Thanks for listening to today's episode of *Overcoming Grief*. If you're ready to move into a new, rewarding life experience, and want more information about how to work with Sandy, visit www.sandy linda.com.