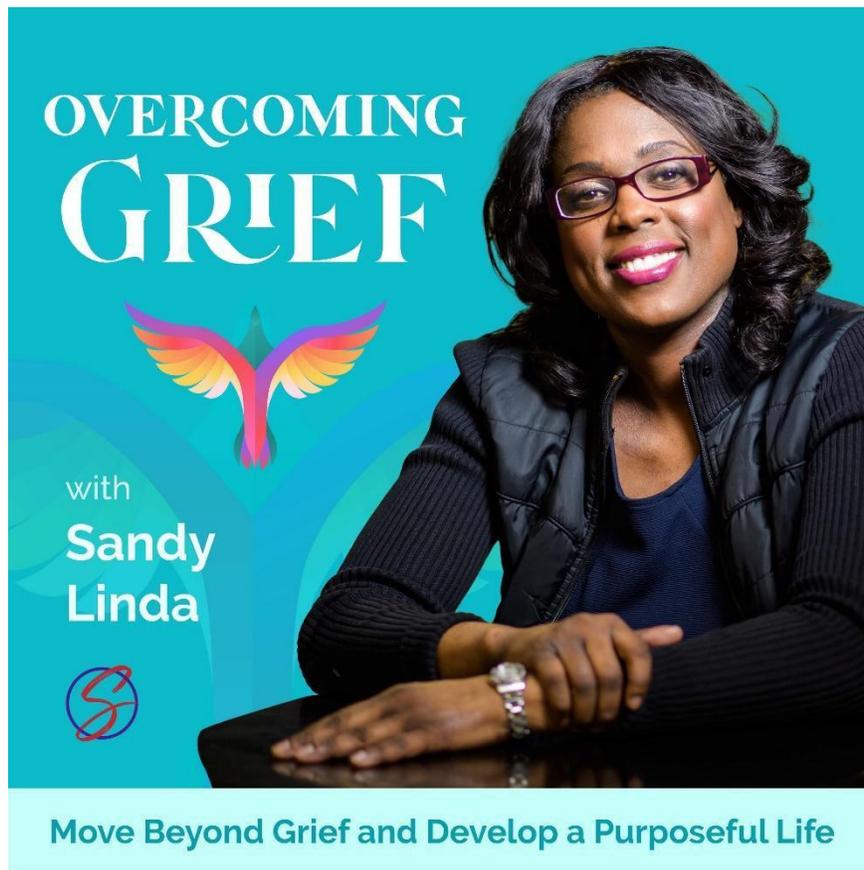


Ep #18: Navigating Grief and Rediscovering Joy During the Holidays



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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Have you ever wondered how to find joy among the season of loss? As the holiday season approaches, I invite you to join me on a journey, one that unwraps the complexities of grief, but more importantly discovers the hidden path to rediscovering joy after loss.

Picture this, a tale of navigating through the holiday blues, the unexpected turns, and the triumphs of strength. Have you ever felt the ache of absence during the festivities or wonder how to survive when the joy seems lost? This episode is your guide. So grab a cozy blanket, a cup of warm, and let's dive into the heartwarming journey of rediscovering joy this holiday season as you find the light in the dark.

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 amazing listeners. How is everyone doing today? Well as for me, I am gearing up for a birthday bash in the Caribbean. Yes, getting out of New York City, this cold weather, and getting some warm sun. Yes, it's my birthday a cozy 10 days before Christmas. Let me tell you, playing second fiddle to the grand gift giving festivities. Have you been there and done that?

Picture this. Well-meaning folks attempting to merge birthday and Christmas gifts into some mega super gift. It's like getting a salt shaker today and a pepper shaker next week, each with its own fancy wrapping paper. Seriously. It's not the cleverest move folks. Gift giving injustice at its fineness.

We've all heard the woes of your December born friends, right? The struggle is real. Guess what? Research backs it up. I know. I looked it up real quick. Sagittarians and Capricorns apparently miss out on a whopping 160 presents on average in their lifetime. Ouch.

It's not just about the double gifts. It's the festive paper insult added to the injury. I mean, really. But hey, shout out to my mom and dad. They have always been

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on top of their game, ensuring separate birthday and Christmas gifts complete with different wrapping papers. Top notch parenting right there.

Though, there was that one time my mom accidentally used Christmas paper for my birthday, but she promised to make it up for our road trip. Now, for the rest of the gang who thought combining my gifts was a bright idea, not cool. But guess what I've matured. Now I'm not afraid to let folks know two gifts or no deal. I've got birthday standards people, and some of you do too. So here's to growing up and having a good laugh about it.

Now, let's cozy up with a cup of warm tea and dive into the heart of the show. Navigating the holidays after the devastating loss of a parent or a sibling can be exhausting. I've been there. Maybe you have too. There are moments when the holiday spirit seemed like a distant memory.

Today I want to open up and share my journey offering not just strategies, but also a bit of comfort and understanding for those who may find this time of year a little bittersweet. Now a bittersweet experience is something that has happy moments and sad aspects. We don't get over our losses. We transform our relationships with them. So allow me to share my story.

So back in February of 2015 I was shocked and angered that my father had had a stroke. His heart was broken due to the devastating loss of my mother, his wife, and my sister, his daughter. He probably could not stand the fact of burying me so he decided to have a heart attack, which left me alone in the hospital on how am I going to do things without my family members, my mom, my dad, and my sister.

I thought my father would last a bit since we can brave through the holidays without feeling guilty if we don't celebrate. So on that cold, wintry night of February of 2015, I found myself wandering in the hospital parking lot, desperately searching for my car. The cold air bit at my skin and the icy pavement threatened to send me scattering with every step. It was a physical battle against the pain that had settled in my chest. The world felt like it was collapsing, and I was swaying at rock bottom.

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My father, my last tie to the family, was hospitalized due to a stroke. He was more than a father. He was my rock, my confidant, someone I shared my every thought with. As I walked through the hospital parking lot, the realization struck me. What were the steps of grief, and how on earth was I going to navigate life without my dad on that cold wintry night before his sudden departure?

Our approach to holidays was simple. We found comfort in each other, peacefully honoring our family's memory without succumbing to external pressures. The preceding year had been marked by grief as we mourned my sister and celebrated the one year anniversary of my mother's passing. The end of 2014 was a stormy journey. While it was stressful, my father and I faced it together.

But then, unexpectedly, he was gone. The shock of his death flooded me with waves of anger and a profound sense of being utterly alone. Suddenly, the path of grief stretched out before me, and I had to navigate its twists and turns all by myself. The holidays, once a time of togetherness, now loomed as a fearsome challenge in the absence of my immediate family.

Now, loneliness settles in like an unwelcome guest. Thoughts echoed in my head. Why does it feel like no one understands? Shouldn't others be more supportive, kinder? The isolation was real, and the holidays magnified the emptiness. Navigating this unique situation felt like a lonely journey. Those around me struggled to learn the deepness of my experience.

The series of losses was so unusual that I looked high and low on my wellbeing throughout the confusion. The support I have counted on vanished, and the road through grief took a more isolating turn. In these moments, it became clear no one fully knows our hearts. Sometimes we are strangers to the profoundness of our own feelings. The grief road, though well-traveled, can be an adorably lonely path. The realization hit hard. Feeling lonely in the process is not just natural, it's expected.

Acknowledging the reality of separation from someone you love is a healthy step on the road to grief and loneliness. It's a familiar, almost expected part of the

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journey. In this alone together space, we can connect with others who have also walked this lonely road after a close loss.

So how did I survive the holidays and eventually learn to enjoy them again without my parents and sister? I have to say it was a rocky painful journey with pain that hit like waves. Sometimes when I least expected, the holidays brought back many memories, every song, smell, and tradition, which was bittersweet.

So I want to dive into the holiday season. For those of us in the loss club, it can be like running through an emotional obstacle course. The pressure to be jolly, yeah, it's different when you're navigating the holiday cheer without your loved ones.

First off, joy felt like that friend who didn't get the memo about the dress code. I mean, can I really be happy without betraying the memory of my parents and sister? It's like hey joy, mind the grief vibe please. Then the well-meaning advice rolls in. They want you to be happy. Great, but my heart needed a GPS to find the joyous intersection without feeling guilty. And ah, the relatives. Sweet souls trying to recreate the perfect Christmas as if life didn't pull a plot twist.

But let's face it, my world got a remix, and I had to find my new holiday normal. It became about honoring their memory while remixing my life playlists. Now, here's a couple approaches that helped me roll through the holidays with a touch of humor and a dash of sanity.

So here's to enjoying the holidays differently. I hope they'll help you too. But remember, grief is personal, and what works for you might not for another. So number one, the pressure to be happy, laugh in the face of expectation. Feeling pressured to be all holly and jolly? Please give it a chuckle and redefine what joy means to you. Maybe it's a quiet night with a cup of tea and a good movie, *The Grinch*.

Number two, practice self-care because you deserve it. Self-care isn't a luxury. It's a necessity. Treat yourself like royalty. Whether it's a spa day or devouring a book you've been eyeing on. Your wellbeing takes the front seat. Number three, redefine your expectations. Make them yours. The holidays come with your own

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script, but who says you can't edit it. Ditch the traditions that feel like a gut punch and create new ones that nod to the old while reflecting your reality.

Do yourself a favor and please plan ahead. Know how you want to spend the holidays, and don't hesitate to say no when you need to. It's all about preserving your wellbeing. Connect with fellow grief advocates, share your stories and struggles, and find solace in the shared experience.

Stories, they are powerful. Take time to reminisce about past holidays, ensuring the memories stay vibrant, especially for those who didn't get to know your loved ones. In my family, my parents played diverse roles during the holidays. I've taken on some, but some gaps can never be filled. And that's okay. I fill those spaces with the memories they left behind. Though insufficient for the loss, I am undeniably richer for knowing them.

I have to say adulting comes with some real head scratchers for me. One of the trickiest lessons I've learned is how to juggle the dark and the light, like an emotional gymnast. Picture this, emotions, the ultimate multitaskers doing a triple twisting, double backflip on a floor routine.

Here's the deal. Emotions aren't solo acts. They are a part of life. You can be on the gratitude train while riding the roller coaster of grief, doing the emotional limbo between heartbreak and love. It's like having a wild party in your heart, and everyone's invited in the highs, the lows, and the downright confusion.

As we step into the holiday season, let's celebrate the joy, the laughter, and the beautiful memories that our loved ones gifted us. Let's embrace a new way of enjoying the season, navigating the holidays, one memory at a time. Remember, it's okay to hold the dark and the light in unity, to be grateful and grieving, to stumble and be happy, to go from heartbreak to love.

My friend's life's a complex dance, and we're all just trying to find rhythm. So I hope these strategies can help you get through your holiday season. I wanted to let you know, if it's possible to share this episode with your friends and family who deserve to hear this. Leave a comment below with your thoughts and experience and subscribe to our podcast for more episodes on overcoming grief.

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Until next time, take care, be kind to yourself, and cherish the memories that light up the path ahead. Have a wonderful day everyone. I'll catch you on the next one. 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.