

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

[Overcoming Grief](#) with Sandy Linda

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

Did you know that women in the Royal Courts of Japan wrote about their daily thoughts and observations in pillow books? Let's explore an ancient practice that can help you with your modern day loss. Stay tuned.

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, everyone. I hope you all are having a delightful month of May. It's been exciting. We've been having some nice weather out here. It's been enjoyable and all. Before I get on to the pillow book, I just want to briefly give you a reminder. I would greatly appreciate it if you could rate and review my show.

Your feedback is invaluable as it helps me reach and support more individuals who, like you, are looking to move beyond the pain of grief and develop a purposeful life. By sharing your thoughts and experiences, you are precious to our community. You're helping us all grow and live with intention. Thanks for being a part of it.

Now, let's get to it. So in the top of the show, I talked about pillow books. Pillow books were diaries used by ancient Japanese noblewomen to record daily thoughts. In the 10th century, it was fascinating how keeping a diary under your pillow had such a rich history. It's no wonder when I used to see my sister write her journal back in our younger years, she would put it underneath the pillow. Now I have the idea where pillow book comes from. So fun fact for you.

So journaling has evolved into a powerful tool for mindfulness, self-reflection, and goal setting. There's something truly holistic about putting your thoughts on paper and seeing them take shape. Think about it. Journaling allows you to document personal experiences, reflect on thoughts and emotions, and better understand yourself.

Today I'll discuss grief journaling, a helpful coping tool for those grieving a loss. I'll cover common challenges, overcoming resistance, and finding the right format, prompts, and exercises for healing. Stay until the end for a special

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

Mother's Day prompt. My dear listeners and our high achieving women. Grab your journal, and let's embark on this sacred journey together.

I wanted to share grief journaling with those who struggle to write. If you need to get things out of your head when no one is available, grab a notebook and label it a grief journal and get your gel pens out. Get those colorful gel pens. I love those.

Grief journaling offers unique benefits compared to other coping strategies. Yes, you have your fellow grieving advocates, your bereavement counselors, but your journal is a safe space to reflect and process complex feelings, especially during grief. Through writing, you can release emotions and find healing and peace. Despite lingering sadness, you find meaning in suffering and feel connected to those you lose. Journaling liberates you, lighting the way through grief.

When your heart aches and grieves over a loss, such as the loss of a parent or sibling, you find yourself navigating one of life's most challenging journeys. It's a journey marked by waves of overwhelming emotions, moments of profound sadness and a heaviness that seems to settle deep within your soul. In the face of such immense pain, it's natural to shut down, internalize your feelings, and carry the weight of your grief in silence.

But here's the thing about grief. It has a way of digging itself deep within you like a hidden treasure waiting to be dug out. You may try to bury your feelings beneath a layers of distractions or busyness, but the pain remains. Boiling just beneath the surface, waiting to be acknowledged, and expressed. The truth is the heaviness we carry doesn't just scatter over time. It remains festering in the shadows until you rally the courage to confront it head on. That's where grief journaling comes in. as a beacon of light in the darkness or tool for dipping into the hidden core of your grief and bringing it into light.

But here's the problem. If you don't open your minds and hearts to the possibility of journaling about your grief, you risk allowing it to remain hidden and unaddressed. You risk internalizing a cycle of pain and silence where your emotions go unacknowledged, and your healing remains unreachable. When starting a grief journaling practice, it's important to acknowledge that you may encounter common challenges or resistance along the way.

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

The most common challenges I hear often from individuals like yourself are the fear of facing painful emotions, perfectionism, and the difficulty finding the time and motivation to write. Now, let's explore why these challenges are significant, and how addressing them can lead to profound healing.

Now, the fear of facing your painful emotions. I know that it is a struggle to write. I've been there, and I know how it feels. It's understandable to feel overwhelmed by the possibility of unpacking deeply buried emotions through writing. I've encountered this view many times from individuals who hesitate to start their journaling practice. The thought of revisiting painful memories or emotions is a lot.

Imagine waking up each morning with a heavy weight pressing down on your chest, the weight of unspoken words, unresolved feelings, and buried pain. You go about your day with a fixed smile on your face, but inside you're drowning in a sea of sorrow. Reminders of your loss hide in the shadows everywhere you turn, waiting to ambush you when you least expect it. The sight of a familiar face and the sound of a song are painful reminders of what you've lost and can never reclaim.

So you do everything in your power to avoid facing the pain head on. You distract yourself with work, social obligation, and anything that will keep the darkness at bay. But no matter how hard you try to outrun it, grief always finds a way to catch up with you in the end. You're afraid of what you might find creeping in the core of your own feelings, fearful of the darkness that threatens you to swallow you. You're scared of facing the pain head on, of allowing yourself to feel the extent of your sorrow. But deep down you know that running from your grief will only prolong the pain and delay the healing process.

I've learned valuable techniques for gently exploring and processing difficult emotions in a safe and supportive manner through my own experience and guiding others. So stay tuned.

Another challenge is perfectionism. The relentless pursuit of perfection can become a double edged blade for high achieving woman navigating grief, slicing through your healing journey with self-criticism. You are accustomed to

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

excellence in every aspect of your lives, from careers to personal relationships, and you hold yourself to high standards.

But when faced with the messy erratic emotions of grief, your perfectionism can be stuffy and rooted in self-doubt. Every journal entry becomes a battleground, a chance for your inner critic to unleash a storm of judgment. You may feel pressure to write perfectly or fear critique about your skills. You may worry that your journal entries won't meet expectations, or you'll make mistakes.

Perfectionism becomes a shield to protect yourself from the raw intensity of your emotions. The burial of your pain goes beneath a mountain of to-do lists and achievements, hoping that if you stay active enough, you can outrun the grief that threatens to consume you.

But the truth is, your perfectionism only serves to amplify your suffering, trapping you in a cruel cycle of self-criticism and shame. Your inner critic becomes a prisoner of your own expectation, unable to let go of the need for control and certainty. As you strive for an impossible ideal of success, you lose sight of the messy, imperfect beauty of the healing process. Recognize that perfection is not the goal of grief.

Another challenge for our high achieving women stumbling with grief is finding the time and motivation to journal. It can feel like an impossible hurdle in the middle of chaos. Every moment is accounted for, and every task is strategically planned and executed with precision. You juggle demand and careers, family obligations, and social commitments, leaving little room for self-care or soul searching.

The days blur together in a never ending whirlwind of activity, leaving you drained and depleted by the time evening rolls around. The thought of sitting down to journal feels like yet another item to an already overflowing to-do list, one that you simply can't afford to prioritize.

Have you ever felt like the only thing standing between you and a self-care routine is a need for more time? As much as we try to prioritize our wellbeing, it can be tough to find the motivation, energy, and belief that our needs are worthy of attention. We're so used to putting others first that carving out time for

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

ourselves can feel selfish and indulgent. But the truth is taking care of ourselves is essential for our health and happiness. It's time to start making ourselves a priority too.

Well, I hope that gave you some insight on some of the challenges that prevent you from grief journaling and will open up your mind to hear some of the practical steps to help you begin your grief journaling. I know facing those painful emotions can feel so discouraging as you start journaling about your loved one's passing. It's completely understandable to feel hesitant to confront such deep grief and sadness head on.

So my suggestion to you is start slowly and be gentle with yourself. This is your safe space. No one else has to read it. You're in full control, and you can write about whatever you feel ready for. Maybe begin with some lighter topics and happy memories you share together. Write about the little moments that made you smile, like inside jokes or favorite activities.

Like for me, I wrote about me and my mom and our road trips. The fun times we had going away to the Caribbean, to the Bahamas, or Jamaica, all the stuff that me and my mom did, and I remember those happy memories. When you start writing those, start to see how you feel writing those out. This can help build your confidence to eventually open up about more difficult emotions when you feel ready.

Don't worry if it takes time to get there. This is a journey of self-discovery. It's not meant to be rushed. Why do we always feel like we need to rush grief? With small steps, you'll find the courage to dig deeper, and I'll be right here cheering you on each step of the way.

The next one is you may feel pressured to write perfectly or fear judgment about your writing skills. You may worry that your journal entries won't be good enough, or you'll say the wrong thing. There's no right or wrong way to journal, and perfection is not the goal. Let go of self-criticism and embrace imperfection. Remember that journaling is a process, and each entry is simply a snapshot of your thoughts and feelings at a particular moment.

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

I know how busy life can get. Between work, family, and everything else on your plate, finding time to journal may feel impossible. Some days start small, maybe while you sip your morning coffee or tea or right before bed. Set a timer for just five to 10 minutes to begin with. There's no need to carve out huge chunks of time. Those precious few minutes are your sacred space to check in with yourself.

As you build momentum, you can gradually increase your journaling time. But don't put pressure on yourself. This isn't about perfection. It's about finding pockets of time that work for you, even a paragraph or two in progress. The key is consistency. When you journal regularly, you build a powerful habit, tuning into your inner world. With each entry you give yourself permission to process those feelings that grief stirs up. You got this.

Just take one journal entry at a time, even in the middle of the busyness. Make yourself and your healing a priority. Your journey is worth those few minutes every day.

Finding healing in the journey of grief surrounded by a storm of emotions can feel like an uphill battle. But in the middle of chaos, a powerful tool is waiting to be utilized, journaling. Grief journaling offers a sacred space for you lovely wonderful listeners to process the complex emotions of grief. It allows you to confront pain, understand yourself better, and find comfort through writing.

Journaling is a journey of self-discovery and growth. It helps build self-awareness, self-compassion, and reclaim healing. Embrace the messy, imperfect nature of grief. Trust that journaling can guide you to peace, strength, and wholeness. Your words have power to heal, transform, and shine in the darkness. Let grief journaling be your light in the middle of darkness.

Now, for those who have lost their mother recently, I want to say that Mother's Day is just around the corner. For many of us, it's a time to celebrate the incredible women who have shaped our lives. But if this is your first Mother's Day without your mom, I want you to know that it's okay to feel however you feel. Sure, Hallmark commercials may try to convince us that Mother's Day is all about sunshine, flowers, and brunches. But the truth is grief doesn't take a

Ep #39: Writing Through the Darkness: Using Journaling to Navigate Grief

holiday, and that's okay. Instead, I encourage you to celebrate however feels right for you.

I want to offer you a special journaling prompt. Set aside some quiet time to reflect on your special bond. No one can ever fully understand the extent of a mother's love. Journaling offers a sacred space to unpack the emotional storms that accompany the loss of a mother, allowing you to express your feelings and memories in a tangible and cathartic way.

So here is your journaling prompt. What are some of your most cherished memories together? How has her absence, your mom's absence, shaped the person you are today? Recount moments of laughter and joy and acknowledge the inner most of your love for her. Allow yourself to be vulnerable. Embrace the full scope of your feelings and find healing in the act of remembering.

Most of all, remember, you're not alone on this journey of grief and healing. Honor your mother by taking care of yourself gently like she always cared for you. Her love surrounds you still, a guiding light helping you move forward one day at a time.

So here's to you, dear friends, as you navigate this bittersweet journey of grief and remembrance. May you find moments of peace, joy, and perhaps even a sprinkle of humor throughout the tears. May you always carry your mom's love with you today and every day.

Well, this was a very special episode for you all. I hope you enjoyed this part of this journaling and have a pretty good idea of what you can work on when it comes to writing out those hardcore feelings. Because in the end, it doesn't have to start with the hard feelings that you're angry or mad. You can start small by laughing. Start there and work your way through. Well, anyway, thank you so much for listening, and I'll catch you on the next one. Bye.

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.