

Ep #48: How to Find Joy Again: Navigating Summer Gatherings After Loss



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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Summer is supposed to be a time of joy and connection, but when you're grieving, it can feel like an endless stretch of emotional triggers and social pressures. What if I told you it's possible to honor your loved one's memory and still enjoy the beauty of the season? Stay tuned for navigating summer grief with resilience and strength.

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, creative humans, how are you all doing today? I am feeling wonderful and adoring my walks in nature and along the beach boardwalk. Between balancing work and enjoying some exciting road trips, I deeply appreciate the opportunities to explore and work remotely.

Recently, I had an insightful question from one of my clients about how to deal with summer grief. This got me thinking about the unique experience of navigating those summer highs and lows during grief. So, grab your favorite summer drink and join me as we dive into this important and often overlooked topic. How can we find balance and healing during these sun-soaked days?

Summertime feels odd when your world gets interrupted by emotional storms of grief. The season that once brought carefree joy now carries a bittersweet ache as memories of loved ones color every sunny day. A year after my mother died, I automatically booked a hotel room. It was our annual tradition, a road trip to celebrate her August birthday.

For a brief heart-wrenching moment, I'd forgotten that she was no longer here to share those precious memories with me. As I stared at the reservations, the reality of my loss hit me once again. The rituals that brought me joy, long drives, laughter, adventure, and connection now slowly remind me of the significant absence. I'm not alone in this experience because my client had the same scenario.

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The summer months can be a bittersweet mix of nostalgia and sorrow for those of us navigating grief. The world around us is alive with celebration and togetherness. But inside, we are dealing with the unshakable reality that someone we love is missing from the picture. If you're feeling sad about missing out on summer gatherings and tradition because your loved one is no longer there, your feelings are valid. The path of grief isn't straightforward and everyone's journey is so different.

On today's show, I will explore how to hold space for both joy and sorrow during these summer months of grief. I will discuss the contrast between internal emotions and external cheerfulness that can be overwhelming for those grieving, identify common triggers in moments of family gatherings, and talk about how families expect you to stay strong and fully engaged.

Of course, we'll offer strategies for honoring your loved one's memory while allowing yourself to find moments of peace and happiness. Together, let's navigate the complicated landscape of grief and learn how to embrace the bittersweet beauty of the season.

After my mother's death, I couldn't comprehend returning to our annual road trips. The idea of retracing those familiar routes, stopping at our favorite hangouts without her by my side, it felt hopeless. The memories that once brought such joy now serve as painful reminders of what I've lost. Yet, the trips weren't the only factor.

Every summer gathering, every family tradition felt like navigating a minefield of grief triggers. The empty chair at the family barbecue, the silent mornings without my mom's laughter over coffee, the well-meaning questions from relatives who didn't understand the extent of my loss. I feel torn between honoring her memory and wanting to keep her with me in these special moments.

At the same time, I want to distance myself and avoid constant reminders of her absence. This tension is something many grieving people experience during the summer months and also my client felt the same. Coping with the loss can make it hard to meet the expectations of joy and togetherness.

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We're told to put on a brave face, to not let our grief disrupt the jolly atmosphere, but grief doesn't take a summer vacation. It comes in waves. It's a constant companion coloring every experience. Trying to suppress it only leads to feelings of isolation, guilt, and emotional exhaustion.

So how do we find our way through this complex landscape? How can we embrace our joy and still allow ourselves to grieve? That's what we'll be exploring. I want to offer you three key point challenges.

The first key point is the memories in our minds, our trigger thoughts. Summer can trigger a flood of bittersweet memories for those grieving. The activities and tradition that once brought joy, family barbecues, beach trips, the 4th of July fireworks now serve as painful reminders of who's missing. The sudden wave of sadness from these memories catches us off guard. They make us wonder if we deserve to enjoy ourselves and if moving forward means betraying our loved one's memory.

Understanding and managing these mental triggers is key to finding peace in the present as you honor the past. We will learn techniques to rethink these memories.

Key point number two challenge, the emotions we carry, the hidden feelings. Summertime gatherings typically have an expectation of cheerfulness. It's hard for those carrying the weight of loss to feel the pressure to smile. Beneath the surface, we are battling with a complex mix of emotions. You know some of the emotions that we face with grief, anger, guilt, loneliness, even moments of joy that catch us by surprise.

Trying to suppress these feelings can lead to a sense of emotional disconnection and isolation. Giving ourselves permission to feel the full scope of our emotions is a critical part of the healing process. We'll talk about how to make room for genuine grieving, even during the joyful summer season.

Key point number three challenge is navigating the pressure to participate, the social expectation. Summer is a time for being together with loved ones and having lots of social events and family commitments. Grieving individuals may feel overwhelmed by the risk of attending these gatherings.

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Well-meaning friends and family may try to tempt us into participating, not understanding that what once felt effortless now takes a tremendous amount of emotional energy. We may feel torn between the desire to connect and the need to protect our own delicate state. Setting boundaries and communicating our needs is essential for managing social pressures. I will explore strategies for participating on our own terms for being present as you're still honoring your healing process.

As I've explored these key challenges, the mental triggers, hidden emotions, and social expectations, it's clear that navigating grief during summer gatherings is a complex journey, but you're not alone in this struggle. Let's now turn our attention to actionable strategies that can help you honor your grief while still finding moments of connection and joy.

These techniques give you the power to actively participate in your own healing process, even during summer celebrations. Let's dive into these strategies, and I have five practical ways to cope with summertime triggers related to your grief.

Number one, create new beliefs. When summer grief triggers happen, acknowledge the memory and sadness. Then try to reframe your thoughts. Repeat to yourself, these memories are special and I can acknowledge them while also experiencing new sources of happiness. Baby steps are okay. Start with one small summer activity that brings you comfort and then build from there.

Number two, validate your feelings. Give yourself permission to feel it all, the grief, the joy, the guilt, the hope. Your feelings are valid. Healing doesn't mean getting over it. It means learning to carry it all with grace. If a moment of happiness catches you by surprise, embrace it without shame. Those joyful moments are not a betrayal of your loved one, but a testament to the light they brought to your life.

Number three, setting healthy boundaries. Setting boundaries is a profound act of self-care. It's okay to say no to invitations that feel overwhelming or to leave early if you need space to breathe. Be honest with your friends and family. Let them know that you're doing your best, but that grief has its own timeline. Most importantly, set boundaries with yourself. Allow yourself to grieve without

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judgment, to rest without guilt, and to find joy without feeling like you're moving on from a loved one's memory.

Number four, practice self-compassion. Treat yourself with the same kindness and understanding you would offer a dear friend who's hurting. When you have self-critical thoughts like I should be over this already, or I'm ruining everyone's summer with my sadness, challenge them with compassionate truth. Remind yourself that grief takes time and your feelings are valid. Taking care of yourself is not selfish. It's essential for healing. Give yourself permission to set up your needs.

Number five, embrace micro joys. When the idea of big summer celebration feels overwhelming, focus on finding small daily moments of lightness and glee. This is as simple as having a good cup of coffee, taking a scenic walk, or watching a funny video. Give yourself these small moments of relief from grief that reminds you that joy and sorrow can coexist. It also reminds you that it's okay to still experience happiness, even as you heal.

Remember, different strategies work for different people at different times. I encourage you fabulous listeners to experiment and find the combination of approaches that feels most supportive and comforting to you. Your grief is valid. There is no right or wrong way to grieve. There is no timeline in grief. I want to offer a warm space of understanding and some gentle guide to help you find your way forward.

So I uncovered a lot today to help you navigate grief during summer's joy that is complex, but a heartfelt journey. There's no one-size-fits-all road map, but there are guiding lights that can help us find our way. Let's shift our mindset about summer memories, focusing on the positive and staying open to new things. We understand the importance of embracing all our emotions without feeling guilty or judged. It became clear to us that establishing boundaries is a fundamental aspect of our recovery.

Above all, I hope this episode has reminded you that you're not alone in this experience. The collision of grief and summer celebration is a reality for many. Your feelings are worthy of care. As you move forward, remember that self-care is a divine discipline. Grief is not a linear journey with a fixed

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destination. It's a windy path with ups and down and trees, forwards and backwards. Trust that you are exactly where you need to be.

On those days when the memories feel bittersweet, lean on your fellow grief advocates or someone who understands you. Turn to your grief toolkit. Practice those small acts of self-compassion. Look for micro joys. Remember that your loved one's light still shines within you, seen in your strength, your recovery, and your capacity to appreciate the joys of summer despite the weight of your grief.

Here is a bonus journaling prompt for your summer healing journey. Take a moment to connect with nature during the summer if all possible. Here's your journaling prompt. How does being outdoors and embracing nature impact your healing journey? Spend 10 to 15 minutes writing about this particular prompt and what it represents in your journey of grief and healing through the summer. I would love to hear how this journaling exercise resonates with you. Please email me your insights at info at sandy linda.com.

I also want to offer you that if all possible, make nature a regular part of your summer routine. Commit to a daily walk, tend to a small garden, or just sit outside with your morning coffee. Notice how these small moments of natural connection impact your overall wellbeing and your ability to cope with the ups and downs of grief.

If today's discussion helped you or gave you any insight, please share this episode with someone you know who might go through something similar. Each share brings support and understanding to our listener community. Join us next time as we continue to explore powerful themes that enhance our professional lives and personal growth. Thank you so much for listening and have a wonderful week. 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.