

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

Although the world is full of suffering, it is also full of the overcoming of it. These words from Helen Keller struck a chord with me during my grief journey. Like Helen's victorious navigation over her blindness and deafness, you too can overcome your grief. How does grief change you? More importantly, how can you harness that change for personal growth? 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, creative humans. How are you all doing today? I am going through some changes, but still embrace those summertime adventures. A colleague and a good friend invited me to the Catskills. Have you ever been? It was my first adventure to check out the New York State Mountains. We set out on a hike seeking comfort and reflection among the rugged beauty of nature. It's amazing how the great outdoors can provide perspective and healing during challenging times.

When I reached the top of the mountain, I was blown away by the stunning scenery, rolling hills, and grassy valleys as far as I could see. At that moment, I realized how my grief journey has shaped my leadership. The climb symbolized how I grew stronger and more aware after experiencing loss.

Having walked through my own valleys and peaks of loss, I now bring the tools to empower others as they navigate their own path of the highs and lows of grief. How does an unexpected interruption impact personal and professional transformation?

In today's show, I will explore the transformative power of grief and how it can lead to a personal growth and courageous leadership. Through my personal journey of navigating multiple losses, I discovered that grief, though challenging, can be a powerful wave maker for personal transformation. It helps me gain special insights and strengths that nurture bold and empathetic leadership in our personal and professional lives.

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

Here's what I will cover in today's show. I will discuss how grief can affect our mental health and overall well-being. I will explore the various elements that shape our grief experience, including our relationships with the deceased and unresolved issues. I will also talk about the challenges of grieving in a society that often push us to move on too quickly. I will share how I discovered ways to channel my grief into personal growth and leadership. Of course, I will provide five practical strategies you can take to navigate your personal grief journey and emerge as a courageous leader.

By the end of this episode, you'll have a deeper understanding of how grief can be a springboard for positive change. You'll be prepared with tools to help you on your own journey of transformation. So whether you're currently navigating grief or supporting someone who is, this episode is for you. Let's dive in and explore how we can become courageous leaders through our grief experiences.

After experiencing some severe setbacks, I was uncertain if any changes were possible. It has been draining because I was clueless about how to cope with the death of my mom, followed by my sister and my dad. Yeah, when you're listening, it's a lot to process. Not to mention the sudden withdrawal of friends who couldn't handle or support me during my grieving process. That made me feel uneasy and messy. Grief was messy and overwhelming, yet it became an unexpected motive for profound personal growth.

Through the pain, I discovered rivers of strength I didn't know I had. I learned to navigate complex emotions, develop a deeper sense of empathy, and gain a new perspective on life priorities. These valuable insights gained from my grief journey began to shape me into a more resilient and compassionate individual, qualities that would later prove invaluable in my leadership roles.

When my mom passed away, the pain was overwhelming, but I felt privileged to have such a loving bond with her. Yes, we had fights here and there, but she always sprinkles it on with travel destinations. Although losing my mom was devastating, I also had other family relationships to grieve.

I soon realized that grieving for my sister would present a different set of challenges. We did not carry a sisterly bond because she remained hateful

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

towards me. I have an episode. If you want to listen to episode 26 about my estranged sibling grief, you could check that out.

The absence of any emotional bond made it challenging for me to grieve for her. My attempts to meet people ended so fast because I was lost and confused. After my dad was the last person to leave this world, I felt empty and did not want to even try to start a new life without my family.

Why go through the trouble? My life felt meaningless until I discovered a way to transform it. I realized that my journey through grief could be an opportunity for self-discovery and transformation. This realization set me on a path of transformation that touched every aspect of my life.

Let me share with you the key insights I gained along the way. The first key point is, and I found this, about 10% of individuals who grieve the loss of a parent or sibling are likely to experience prolonged grief. My experience with multiple loss taught me that grief isn't just about percentages. It's a deeply personal journey that can profoundly impact our mental health and overall well-being.

Grief was so complicated that I developed mental disorders that prevented me from making wise decisions. I was in such a dark place that it was uncomfortable to share my experience with anyone besides my therapists.

Now, prolonged grief disorder often occurs along with other mental disorders such as anxiety, which I had, and depression. This difficulty can make the healing process even more challenging, but understanding these connections can be a crucial step in seeking appropriate support and treatment.

The next key point is the duration and intensity of grief after losing a parent or a sibling can be influenced by various factors. The relational bond, the nature of your relationship with the deceased greatly impacts your grief journey. Consider these two questions. Did you have unconditional love with your parents? Was there unresolved conflict with a sibling? Unresolved issues?

In cases where relationship were once joyful but later became strained, it becomes that unspoken grievances and unresolved conflicts can lead to a deep sense of regret. The absence of closure can intensify the grieving process. The

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

changing impact. Your parent or sibling no longer has a direct impact on you, whether positive or negative. Grief becomes about facing this new reality.

Understanding these factors that influence grief doesn't just help you process your own loss. It prepares you with valuable leadership skills. By recognizing the difficulties of relationships and unresolved issues, you develop a soft understanding of human dynamics. This insight allows you to lead with greater empathy and emotional intelligence, navigating complex interpersonal situations in the workplace more effectively.

The last key point is grief recovery. Many people have neglected their grief recovery because of society's pressure to move on and get back to work. We've been taught by society to suppress our feelings. Our task is to bury it in the grave and keep moving forward with joy. Ugh. People avoid unpacking their feelings because of the pain it caused.

I have another story that happened to me last week, actually. Another colleague who knows my situation, and she went up and told me that she avoids me because she doesn't want to feel her emotions. It's too painful. She even says she fears me because it's dreadful for her to expose herself to me. I didn't quite understand what she meant.

However, when she cried out to me, expressing the uncomfortable pain she felt, I asked her do you still feel fear in front of me? As she sniffled, her voice, strong, firmly said no. I told her that when people can't cope with their emotions, they suppress them to regulate. So there's no need for her to fear me. She's fearing her own self. The situation is messy because some folks are lacking a clear path towards healing.

Now, changing our perspective to see the big picture isn't easy or pain-free. Just as we might hesitate to leave a comfortable job despite a toxic boss, we often cling to our grief, fearing the unknown that lies beyond it. The prospect of moving forward can be as terrifying as starting a new business.

But here's the truth. Grief, like an unfulfilling job, is not meant to be a permanent state. It's a transition, an ending, yes, but also a beginning. It's a necessary step before something new come into existence. Going through grief is like starting a

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

new chapter in life. It's challenging, uncertain, and at times terrifying, but it also holds the potential for growth, self-discovery, and unexpected joys. Just as an entrepreneur must take risk to achieve their dreams, you must be willing to face your grief head on to heal and transform.

So, how do we begin this transformation? How do we take those first steps into the unknown? Let me share with you some actionable advice that has helped me navigate my own journey of grief and change. Again, these are just some suggestions that I wanted to offer and share with you.

So, the first one is to acknowledge your grief story. When you're ready and have received initial support through bereavement counseling, take time to acknowledge your unique grief story. Write it down or share it with your bereavement counselor or a trusted friend or a fellow grieving advocate. This act of acknowledgement can be profoundly healing and can help you understand your journey better.

Acknowledging your grief story is not just a personal healing process, it's a powerful leadership tool. By embracing this part of your journey, you cultivate authenticity, deepen your emotional intelligence, and model resilience for your team. Here's an action step I want you to try. Set aside 30 minutes this week to start writing your grief story. Remember, this is for you. There's no right or wrong way to do it.

Number two, challenge your self-talk. Pay close attention to your inner dialogue and question its validity. When negative thoughts arise, like nobody cares about my grief, pause and challenge them. Ask yourself is this true? What evidence supports or contradicts this thought? Here's another action step I would love for you to do. Keep a thought journal for a week. Each time you have a negative thought about your grief, write it down and then write a more balanced, realistic alternative.

Number three, name and navigate your feelings. Identify and give proper attention to the various emotions of grief. These might include sadness, anger, guilt, resentment, bitterness, disbelief, and loneliness. Remember, all of these feelings are valid and part of the process.

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

Another action step I would love for you to do is create an emotional wheel for your grief. Each day, identify which emotions you're experiencing and journal about them. This can help you track your emotional journey and identify patterns.

Number four, embrace resilience in the face of disruption. Overcoming grief. Recognize that setbacks are a normal part of the grieving process. While you can't control external events or others' reaction, you can control your response. Focus on developing coping mechanisms that promote healing and foster resilience. Reframe setbacks as learning experiences. It helps you to shift your focus away from negative thoughts or emotions. You will grow as an individual and propel you forward on your journey to success.

Develop a resilience toolkit. List five healthy coping strategies you can use when facing setbacks. This might include deep breathing, calling a friend, or engaging in a favorite hobby.

Number five, cultivate inner peace. Work towards a state of inner peace and acceptance. This doesn't mean forgetting your loved one but rather finding a way to move forward while honoring their memory. In this action step, start a daily mindfulness practice. Even just five minutes a day of meditation or mindful breathing can help cultivate inner peace. Remember, healing is a journey, not a destination. Be patient with yourself as you work through these steps. Each small action you take is a step towards transformation and healing.

As we wrap up today's episode, let's reflect on the transformative journey we explored together. We explored grief in all its glory, understanding its power to shape us and make us better leaders. Remember, your grief journey is yours alone, but you're not alone in navigating it.

Here are the key takeaways to help you transform your grief into a source of strength and courage. Embrace your story. Your grief is part of your life story. By acknowledging and sharing it, you not only heal yourself, but also inspire others. Reframe your thoughts. Challenge negative self-talk and reframe your grief experience as an opportunity for growth and self-discovery. Honor your emotions.

Ep #49: Are Leaders Made Stronger by Grief? My Transformation Story

Name and navigate your feelings. Each emotion is a stepping stone towards healing and understanding. Build resilience. Overcoming grief. Embrace life disruptions as a chance of developing coping mechanism and foster resilience. Cultivate inner peace. Work towards acceptance and inner peace, not by forgetting, but by finding new ways to honor your loved ones and move forward.

By applying these strategies, you're not just overcoming grief. You're transforming it into a source of wisdom, empathy, and strength. These are the very qualities that define courageous leaders. Your grief doesn't define you, but how you grow through it can redefine you.

As you continue on this journey, remember that every step forward, no matter how small, is an act of courage. You have the power to not only heal, but to emerge as a beacon of hope and a resilience for others. In the words of Helen Keller, character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.

You are on the path to becoming that courageous leader in your personal life, in your relationships, and even in your professional pursuits. Embracing change can help you find your inner strength even in times of grief. Remember, seeking support is a sign of strength, not weakness. If you're struggling, please reach out to a mental health professional or a bereavement counselor.

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. Thank you for joining me on this exploration of grief, transformation, and leadership. Until next time, be kind to yourself and keep moving forward one step at a time. 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.