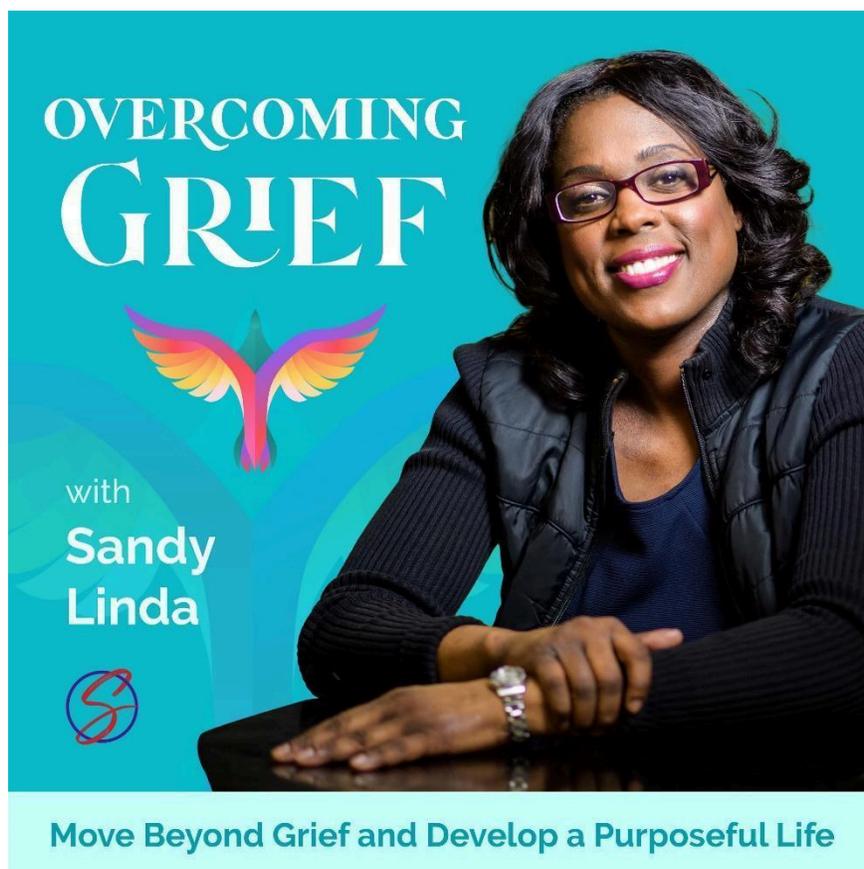


Ep #52: Grief Relief: How to Strike A Balance Between Solitude and Social Support



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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When should you retreat to your private island of reflection? And when should you swim towards the lighthouse of social support? What if I told you that finding the right balance between these two could be the key to not only surviving your loss, but also becoming stronger and more resilient? Let's unravel this mystery of grief journeys. Stay tuned.

Hello, creative humans, happy September. I took some time off in August to reflect and rejuvenate. And thank you for our loyal weekly listeners that sent me email about where I was, and I just needed that time off. So I'm back, y'all. So during one of my outings, I walked through the stores and saw the Halloween decorations already out in full force. It hit me how quickly we are approaching the end of the year. Seeing those Jack-O-Lanterns and candy displays got me thinking about how the upcoming holiday season can be especially challenging when we're grieving.

Time flies, doesn't it, when we're working or healing through our grief storms. And it's not always easy to prioritize our healing while also striving to be courageous leaders in our business and personal lives. In my time of reflection, I've been thinking a lot about the delicate balance between solitude and socializing in the grieving process. It's a theme that's come up in conversations with many of you, and it's what I will be diving into in today's episode. And I have a great question from one of our email subscribers to kick us off.

The question was, how might the balance of solitude and socializing shift throughout the grieving process? This is such an important question and one that many of us wage war with as we navigate loss. Grief is a personal journey that messes with our minds, leaving us torn between wanting to be by ourselves and needing people to lean on, the desire for solitude, and the need for social support. On one hand, we yearn for quiet moments to process our emotions, to remember and to heal. On the other hand, we crave the comfort of human connection, understanding, and shared experiences.

But striking this delicate dance balance isn't easy. Some days we feel overwhelmed and just need some time alone to grieve. Then there are moments when loneliness creeps in and we desperately wish for a comforting presence. This struggle gets even more complicated because of what society expects, advice from well-meaning, but sometimes clueless people, and our own

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changing needs as we navigate through loss. Some of us may feel pressure to get back out there before we're ready, while others might isolate themselves a bit longer.

Today, we're going to explore this challenging balancing act. We'll discuss why it's okay, even necessary, to spend time alone with your grief. Also, how to recognize when it's time to reach out and connect. Whether you're in the middle of grief right now, supporting someone who is, or simply want to be prepared, this episode is for you. Remember, there's no one-size-fits-all to grief. By the end of this episode, I hope you will have the insights and tools to find the right balance for you, a balance that honors your need for solitude while also embracing the healing power of human connection.

When I suddenly lost both of my parents and sister within a short period of time, my world shattered. I was confused and alone, not knowing how to move forward in life and work without their guidance. In those early days of raw grief, I often felt torn between two competing needs. On one hand, I crave the comfort of human connection. I long for someone to sit with me in my pain, to listen without judgment, and to remind me I wasn't alone. To my surprise and disappointment, many of my friends and family members, who I thought would be there for me, slowly drifted away. Whether from their lack of knowledge in managing the intensity of my grief or their own personal pain, I grew more isolated.

Thankfully, I had been working with a therapist since the beginning of this journey when I first lost my mom. He became a lifeline for me as I dealt with the subsequent losses of my sister and my dad. In the absence of my usual support system, my therapist provided a safe space for me to process my complex emotions and to feel seen and heard. After two years of individual therapy, I joined a bereavement group, which provided a unique kind of connection with others who understood the extent of grief.

Apart from these professional supports, I pretty much dealt with my grief on my own. At first, this solitude felt overwhelming and frightening. I worry I wasn't grieving right, that I should reach out more, that I should be over it by now. However, I found a strange comfort in the solitude with no one else's expectations of me. I could grieve in my way at my own pace. I could cry when I

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needed to, sleep when I was exhausted, and laugh at old memories without worrying about making others uncomfortable.

In the quiet moments, I began to reconnect with myself. I journaled about my parents and sister. I took long walks in nature. I even made art that expressed my pain and my love. Over time, I rediscovered parts of myself which helped me build resilience and self-compassion. It wasn't easy, and I still experience moments of intense loneliness. I often long for greater hands-on support from loved ones, but I came to realize that being alone was not the same as being lonely. In learning to be there for myself, I was cultivating a resilience and self-compassion that would serve me for the rest of my life.

Looking back, I now see that the dance between alone time and social support was an essential part of my grieving process. I needed both in different measures at different times. Learning to honor those needs even when they felt different was a profound act of self-care. And in time, that balance helped me find my way forward.

So when faced with so many losses, you may have some friends and family that support your grief, but it can be overwhelming. As my fellow grievers shared with me that long after the funerals, they had been pushing themselves to respond to every condolence message, to take every phone call, to accept every invitation to connect. They thought they were supposed to keep themselves busy, to distract themselves from the pain. But by the end of the week, they were emotionally and physically drained. The realization struck them that they had been neglecting their own needs while trying to avoid being alone. It was time to say no to invitations without feeling guilty.

So let's explore an approach that allows for both alone time and social interaction as you navigate through grief. So I'm going to share the tips for embracing solitude. And then I'm going to offer you tips on maintaining that balance with social interaction.

So embracing solitude during grief isn't about isolation. It's about creating a sanctuary for healing. First, carve out a safe space in your home, an area that wraps you in comfort and allows your emotion to flow without judgment. This could be a cozy corner with soft blankets, calming colors, or meaningful items.

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For me, my space is my living room, where I have a window that overlooks a beautiful, natural scene. As I sit in this space, watching colorful birds fly through the trees, bringing a sense of calm to my grief. This view of nature provides a sense of peace and perspective, reminded me that even during loss, life continues on.

This safeguard is all about feeling and letting go of my emotions. Whether I'm crying, writing in my journal, or simply sitting in silent meditation, this space provides a judgment-free zone where I can be true and defenseless. The combination of comforting surroundings and the natural beauty outside my window creates an atmosphere that is helpful to healing and self-reflection. When creating your own safe haven, consider what elements bring you a sense of comfort and peace. Perhaps it's a favorite armchair, a cherished photograph. The key is to design a space that feels nurturing and supportive. A place where you can retreat to when you need to process your grief in solitude.

Next, fill your solitude with purpose. Dive into activities that soothe your soul and quiet the storm within. Let the pages of a book transport you. You can always get my book, *Champion Through Multiple Losses*, or pour your heart onto paper through journaling, or find stillness in meditation. These practices aren't escapes, they're bridges to understanding and processing your loss.

Remember, you're the gatekeeper of your space and time. It's not just okay, but essential to set clear boundaries. Communicate your needs openly with loved ones and a simple phrase that you can share with them. "I need some time alone." And that phrase can be powerful and liberating.

And last, don't confuse solitude with complete disconnection. Seek professional support. A therapist or a grief counselor can be your anchor, helping you navigate the waters of grief while encouraging you to stay functional. They can provide the tools to find meaning and purpose even in your darkest moments. Embracing solitude isn't about shutting out the world. It's about creating a protector where you can transform your pain into growth. It's in these peaceful moments that you may find your greatest strength and deepest insight. So give yourself permission to retreat, reflect and ultimately renew.

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And now here's tips on maintaining the balance between social support and solitude. Striking the right balance between solitude and socializing is crucial for healing. Begin by being upfront about your needs and boundaries with others. This lays the foundation for understanding and respect. Have a balance of alone time and socializing on your schedule. This structured approach keeps you nurturing both aspects of your wellbeing. Don't shy away from new experiences that resonate with your values and interests. These can offer fresh perspectives and connections. And lastly, regularly check in with yourself. Your needs may shift as you move through grief, so be ready to adjust your balance accordingly. Remember, there's no fixed formula. The key is finding what works best for you at each stage of your grief journey.

In today's episode, I explore the difficult dance between alone time and social support when grieving. Just as a dancer must find balance and harmony between stillness and movement, those who are grieving must navigate the delicate interaction between solitude and connection. I talked about the importance of both finding solitude for self-reflection and seeking support from others during the healing process. Like a dance, the rhythm of this balance can shift over time with the need for each changing from day-to-day and person to person.

I share tips for embracing the solo parts of this dance, such as creating a safe haven, engaging in purposeful activities, setting boundaries, and seeking professional support. I also discuss strategies for gracefully uniting with others, clearly communicating your needs, scheduling time for both reflection and engagement, and being open to new experiences.

It's important to remember that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to grieving. What works for one person may not work for you, and what you need today might be different tomorrow. The key is to develop self-awareness and to honor your unique needs as they evolve. Grieving is an intimate, personal journey. and finding the right balance between solitude and socializing is an ongoing process. Trust your instincts, be willing to adapt, and remember that you are not alone.

As I wrap up today's episode, I want to thank you for joining me on this journey of navigating the delicate balance between solitude and social support during

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the grieving process. I hope that the insights and strategies I've discussed have resonated with you and will help you honor your unique needs as you heal.

If you find value in today's conversation, I have a personal request. Your feedback is meaningful to us and helps shape the future of our podcasts. If you found value in today's episode, or if any of our past episodes have resonated with you, I would love for you to take a moment to leave me a review. Please take two minutes to leave a rating and a review and share one thing you're taking away from this episode or past episode.

Your reviews not only help us reach more people who may benefit from our conversation, but they also provide us with the motivation and guidance to continue delivering content that supports and inspires you. Each review helps our podcast get discovered by others who are also seeking ways to move beyond grief and step into their leadership capacity to rebuild.

Remember, every ending is a new beginning. Embrace the opportunity for growth and self-discovery as you navigate the balance of solitude and social interaction. And what I want to leave you with today is lean with courage, grieve with grace, and nurture your inner strength for your wellbeing. Thank you so much for listening and have a beautiful 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.