

Ep #60: The Silent Struggle: How Grief Steals Your Appetite



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sandy Linda

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When grief moves in, appetite often moves out. But here's what nobody tells you. It's not just about feeling too sad to eat. Turns out your body's got this whole behind scenes thing going on, and it's pretty wild. Stay tuned for insights on why your appetite ghosted you during grief.

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 doing today? If it's your first time, welcome to the show. It's so good to have you with us today. A special thanks to those who continue to support and listen. I understand the hardship and loneliness of the grief journey, but you are not alone. I'm sending you all my deepest empathy and wishes for healing as you navigate this challenging path.

Speaking of timing, happy Halloween, everyone. I've been thinking lately about how grief just changes everything, even our traditions. I used to go all out with elaborate costumes. While my mom, oh, she had her own special way of celebrating. She wasn't big on the spooky stuff. No cobwebs or witch hats in our house, but let me tell you about what made October special in our home.

While everyone else was loading up on candy corn, there was my mom in the kitchen, stirring this incredible homemade vegetable soup. The whole house would just smell amazing. Sure, she had the essential candy bowl for trick-or-treaters, but you know what was really on her mind? Already planning that Thanksgiving menu while her soup simmered away.

But after she passed, everything shifted. It wasn't just the absence of Halloween traditions. My entire relationship with food was completely transformed. That vegetable soup, I couldn't even walk down the soup aisle at the grocery store without my heart doing backflips. My usual excitement about cooking vanished quicker than those big candy bars at Halloween.

You know what? That's exactly what I am diving into today. This weird thing that happens when grief shows up and suddenly your favorite foods lose their

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magic. If you're nodding along right now thinking yes, this is exactly what I'm going through, stick around. It's a common thing, but people rarely bring it up. Let's explore and unpack all of it together.

Today's episode is about that silent side of grief. The one that affects not just our hearts, but our appetites too. You know that feeling when your go-to comfort food just doesn't hit the spot anymore. Or when the mere thought of eating makes your stomach churn. If you've been there, you're not alone. It's super common to lose your appetite when you're grieving. It's like your body forgets about hunger while your heart and mind deal with the loss.

After my mother passed away, I struggled with eating and lost a lot of weight. She was an amazing cook and taught me from a young age. However, after her death, I find it difficult to even enter the kitchen. It's normal to not have an appetite in the first few months of grieving. The shock of losing the rhythm in our lives may amplify the grief of losing someone we hold dear. It's no surprise that meals and regular mealtimes get forgotten. Sound familiar?

This isn't just in our heads. There's actually science behind why grief can turn off your hunger switch. Get this, your gut health plays a surprising role in how we cope with bereavement. Who knew, right? But don't worry, I'm not going to leave you hanging with just the problem.

In this episode, we are going to break down the biology of grief and appetite in plain English. No PhD required. Plus, I got some practical tips up my sleeve to help you nourish your body even when your appetite seems to have gone on an extended vacation. So whether you're in the thick of grief yourself or supporting someone who is, stick around. We are about to embark on a journey through the silent world of appetite loss during grief. Trust me, you want to hear this. Let's dig in.

You know how when you're on an emotional roller coaster, your stomach seems to have a mind of its own. Well, there's a fascinating science behind this. I promise to break it down in a way that make you go ah, that makes so much sense.

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Studies have discovered that stress can significantly impact on the appetite. In cases of acute or recent stress, individuals often experience a reduced desire to eat. The link between stress and appetite is likely due to stress altering the production of hormones that regulate the appetite.

Let's discuss the reality of grief's impact on your body. Think of your body as a sophisticated emergency response system. When you're grieving, it's like pressing that big red stress button, and your entire system goes into what scientists call fight, flight, or freeze mode.

It's fascinating how your body reacts to emotional pain in a similar way to physical danger. It's like your internal control center is saying hold up, we got bigger things to deal with than hunger right now. Just like that, your digestive system gets put on the back burner.

I remember when one of my grieving advocates told me, it's like my stomach forgot how to be hungry. You know what? That's exactly what's happening at a biological level. Here's the science part, but don't worry. I'll keep it simple.

There's this stress hormone called cortisol. Think of it as your body's alarm system. Usually it helps regulate your appetite, but when grief hits, that alarm gets stuck on full blast. It's like trying to watch your favorite show with a fire alarm going off. Your digestive system just can't function normally with all that stress happening. Here's what's going on inside your body.

Your blood flow literally gets redirected away from your digestive system. Your hunger hormone gets all mixed up and even the part of your brain that makes food enjoyable temporarily shuts down. Understanding this science stuff matters because it helps you realize something important. You're not being difficult or not trying hard enough. Your body is doing exactly what is designed to do when you're under emotional stress.

Before we move on to some practical strategies, can I ask you something? Would you take just a couple of minutes to leave a rating and a review? Your feedback helps us reach more people who might need this support. Just share one thing you learned today. That's all it takes. We really appreciate it.

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Now, let's talk about some practical ways to handle eating during grief. I got some simple but powerful techniques for you. The first tool is the five senses exercise. Before you start eating, take a moment to engage all five senses. Look at your food, noticing its colors and textures. Smell the aromas. Touch your utensils or the food itself if appropriate. Listen to any sounds as you prepare to eat. Finally, when you take that first bite, really taste it, noticing all the flavors.

Second tool is gratitude prayer or practice. Before you eat, say a prayer, such as bless our food and our divine. May this food and drink restore our strength and soul. Or take three deep breaths and think of one thing that you are grateful for about this meal. It could be as simple as having food available or remembering a happy memory associated with the dish.

A third tool, mindful bites. Try eating the first three bites of your meal in complete silence, focusing solely on the experience of eating. Chew slowly and deliberately. The fourth step, pause and breathe. Every few bites, pause and take a deep breath. This helps you slow down and check in with your body's hunger and fullness cues. The last tool, loving kindness meditation. Before eating, take a moment to send kind thoughts to yourself. You might say silently may I be nourished. May I find moments of peace.

Now let's talk about how these techniques can help with grief-related anxiety and loss of appetite. Mindful eating can act as an anchor, bringing you into the present moment when anxiety about the future or memories of the past threaten to overwhelm you.

By focusing on the sensory experience of eating, you're giving your mind a break from grief-related thoughts. These practices can also help reconnect you with your body's signals. Grief often disconnects us from physical sensations, including hunger. Give your full attention to your food and eating, and you might notice your appetite coming back.

Remember, it's okay if your mind wanders during these exercise. That's completely normal, especially when you're grieving. The goal is to softly redirect your focus to the meal in front of you over and over again. Mindful eating isn't about forcing yourself to eat or ignoring your emotions. It's about creating a space where you can nourish your body while acknowledging your

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feelings. Even if you only eat a little, practicing these techniques can help make mealtimes a bit more manageable and perhaps even peaceful.

All right, beautiful humans, we are wrapping up, and we covered a lot of ground today. Let's break down the big takeaways, and it matters. You know that weird thing happening with your appetite right now? Turns out your body isn't betraying you. It's faithfully doing exactly what it's designed to do when grief hits. Wild, right?

It's like your internal system is saying hey, we got some emotional heavy lifting to do right now, and food needs to take a back seat. Understanding this helped me stop beating myself up about not eating normally. I hope it helps you too. We talked about some practical stuff too, those mindful eating techniques that don't require you to be some Zen master. Maybe you try the five senses thing next time you eat, or maybe just take three deep breaths before a meal. Whatever works for you.

Because here's the thing. There's no grief eating for dummies manual. You're writing your own story here. Some days you might crush it and cook a whole meal. Other days hey, if all you managed was a granola bar and some water, you're still winning. Because taking care of yourself during grief isn't about being perfect. It's about being real.

You know what gets me? How many of us are going through this same struggle, but feeling so alone in it. Well, not anymore. You've got an entire community here who gets it. Those 3:00 a.m. moments when nothing tastes right. We've been there. The well-meaning friends pushing food on you. Yep, been there too.

So here's your permission slip to do grief and appetite your way. Perhaps today you could give one technique I discussed about today. Maybe it means calling that friend who just gets it, or maybe it just means being a little kinder to yourself about the whole food thing.

Before I wrap up, I want you to know something. You are doing better than you think you are. Grief is heavy, and you're carrying it while still showing up here, still trying to figure things out. That's not small stuff.

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If today's discussion helped you or gave you any insights, please share this episode with someone you know who might go through something similar. Each share brings support and understanding to our listener community. Until next time, beautiful humans, keep being gentle with yourselves.

Thank you for joining me on this exploration of grief and appetite. May you find moments of peace, comfort, and nourishment in the days ahead. Take care of those hearts, and those appetites will follow when they're ready. Remember to grieve with grace, nurture your inner strength, and lead with courageous heart. Have a beautiful day, everyone. 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.