

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief



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With Your Host

Sandy Linda

[The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy](#)
with Sandy Linda

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What if the most painful loss of your life is offering you a gift? Not just any gift, but the clearest view of yourself? When everything familiar is stripped away, you see what's all been there all along. Let's explore the unexpected mirror that grief holds up in our lives. Stay tuned!

Welcome to *The Reinvention Lab: Where Ambitious Women Transform Loss into Legacy*. Hosted by Master Certified Life Coach and fellow trailblazer, Sandy Linda, this is your space to discover how life's biggest challenges can ignite profound transformation—where grief becomes growth, setbacks become stepping stones, and your unique story lights the way for others. If you're ready to turn life's challenges into opportunities for leadership, legacy, and forward momentum, you're in the right place. Let's dive in.

Hello, creative humans and fellow trailblazers. Thank you for joining me today. It's been a downpour over here on the East Coast. But you know what they say, April showers bring May flowers. Despite the soggy weather, I still bundle up for my nature walks. They keep me sane. It's funny how clarity often comes when you're splashing through puddles.

Last week, a coaching buddy and I were at the park, and we got to talking. We noticed how many of our clients chase after the shiny stuff—the reputation, the corner office, the impressive bank account. That drive helps them climb the ladder pretty quickly. But many hit a point where all that success feels empty. Like they ordered an expensive five-star meal that turned out to have no flavor.

In our 40s and beyond, a nagging feeling arises that something is missing. There's a gap between the life we have built and the person we want to be. But then, life throws us a curveball. Losing a loved one too soon. Getting an unexpected pink slip. Facing the cold shoulder from respected people. Or a health scare.

While these moments knock us flat, something amazing often follows. Instead of staying stuck in the “why me” mode, we find these painful experiences act like mirrors—showing us parts of ourselves we never saw before. The tough stuff

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

transforms us. We stop seeing ourselves as victims and start seeing ourselves as heroes.

Today, I am diving into how grief—despite the pain—can be an incredible flashlight that helps you discover your true self. Those discoveries fuel your next chapter. I thought about why some women bounce back stronger after loss while others get stuck. The difference often comes down to one skill: self-awareness.

Self-awareness isn't just a fluffy self-help concept. It's a secret superpower when rebuilding your life. Think of it as the foundation of your reinvention toolkit. Without it, anything you try to build will wobble and collapse.

I am going to explore three game-changing aspects of self-awareness after loss. First, I'll examine how loss strips away our carefully constructed identities—sometimes built over decades. That career title, relationship role, community position. When they're gone, who are we? This feels brutal, but it creates a space for something new.

Then, I will dive into the uncomfortable questions grief forces us to confront. Who am I without this person? And what parts of myself have I abandoned while taking care of everyone else? These questions aren't just painful, they are portals to your next chapter.

And finally, and this part blew my mind when I learned it, I'll explore the neuroscience behind why crisis creates clarity. There's research on how our brains process loss that enhances our awareness of what matters.

I won't sugarcoat it. Facing your reflection after loss takes courage. But I promise you, on the other side is a more authentic, powerful version of yourself that is fully alive. Grab your emotional notebook or a box of tissues because today's episode will give you practical tools to transform your grief mirror into a doorway to your reinvention.

Let's get started. Ever caught your reflection in a store window, unexpectedly? That moment of, "oh, that's me." That's what grief does, but deeper. When we lose someone or something central to our identity, a partner, a parent, a career,

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

we're forced to reassess ourselves without that familiar frame. It's like someone took down the long-hung picture, revealing an unnoticed empty space.

Loss can strip away our carefully constructed identities. We spend years, sometimes decades, building these structures of who we are. I'm a wife, a marketing director, a daughter, a sister. I'm the reliable one, the high achiever. But when grief hits like a storm, washing away our labels, we're left standing there, dripping wet, asking, "Who am I now?"

After my loss, I caught myself staring in the mirror thinking, "Who is this person?" I didn't just look different, though grief changes us physically, mentally, emotionally, I didn't recognize the person behind the eyes anymore.

This stripping away is painful, but it's also, weirdly liberating. When everything you thought defined you is gone or changed, you get a rare opportunity to see yourself clearly, maybe for the first time.

Grief forces us to confront long-avoided questions. Who am I without this person by my side for 20 years? Or what's left of me if I'm not in this career that consumed my identity? It's like grief hands you a magnifying glass and says, "Hey, take a good look."

It's not just about what we've lost. Grief makes us see what we've neglected, those parts of ourselves we put on a shelf while being everything to everyone else. Maybe you used to paint, dance, or had dreams you set aside? Grief forces us to reckon with what really matters. When the ground beneath you crumbles, you get clear about what to save. Is it relationships? Creative expressions? Making an impact? The superficial stuff falls away in the face of loss.

There's fascinating neuroscience behind why crisis creates clarity. After profound loss, our brains enter a fight-or-flight state, but with a twist. The center part of the brain, which is the emotional alarm, floods our system with stress hormones. But at the same time, our thinking brain activates to make sense of the situation.

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

This combination creates a state where we're both emotionally raw and thinking deeply. It's like our normal filters get bypassed. The stories we tell ourselves. The roles we play. The masks we wear. They all get shut down. And in that raw state, we see hidden truths.

I think loss is the ultimate mirror. It shows us not just who we are, but who we could become. When we look into that mirror, we find the building blocks for what comes next. Yes, grief is painful and disorienting. It's the last thing we choose. But that mirror, it might show us the most honest reflection of ourselves we've ever seen.

Before I continue, if you're enjoying this episode, please leave a rating or comment on your podcast app. Your feedback helps other women, creatives, and leaders find these insights. And I love hearing how these ideas resonate with you. Every five-star rating brings this message to someone who needs it.

Now, let's get into common reflections in the grief mirror. Emotional intelligence experts say self-awareness is the foundation. It's about knowing your internal states, preferences, and resources. Understanding who you are and what you prefer.

Let me get personal for a moment. For three years after losing my mom, I felt lost. She wasn't just my mother. She was my travel buddy, a chef extraordinaire, and the person I could call about everything, from classroom drama to workplace politics. I was so focused on what I had lost, I couldn't see what remained. And that was myself, which I had neglected for many years.

I discovered the concept of self-awareness, this mirror I had been hiding from. From my journey, and working with women in similar transitions, I've learned grief reflects unique patterns, common realizations when we finally look into that mirror. Let's discuss what we see when grief holds up that mirror. These reflections might sound familiar.

The first reflection: the revelation of unacknowledged strength. Many women discover they are much stronger than they knew. Grief strips away the self-doubt we've carried for decades. One client said, "I never thought I could handle the

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

finances or decide about the house. I was terrified.” Then, suddenly, she was doing it all—and doing it well. Grief showed her a hidden capability behind the roles she’d settled into.

The second reflection: recognizing unhealthy patterns. This can be uncomfortable. In grief’s mirror, we often see relationships or habits that no longer serve us. Maybe it’s friendships where you always give but never receive? Or the tendency to seek approval before making decisions? I saw how I built my schedule around mom’s needs, which was beautiful, but it meant I never developed certain independence. Seeing these patterns with your hand mirror is the first step to changing them.

And the final, third reflection: the recognition of our capacity for renewal. The most powerful reflection in grief’s mirror is seeing our capacity for transformation. After a devastating loss, we can grow in new directions. We’re not just survivors, we’re capable of reinvention. The beautiful thing about these reflections is that, once seen, they can’t be unseen. They become the foundation for building a new chapter that’s more authentically aligned with who you are.

So, I’m curious, which of these reflections resonate most with you? Or is there another reflection you’ve discovered in grief’s mirror that I haven’t mentioned? Oh, and by the way, I should mention, if you haven’t signed up already for my email list, click the link in the show notes below. You’ll receive my grief journaling workbook, plus upcoming events that I only share via email. Don’t forget to subscribe.

We’ve explored grief’s mirror together and seen these powerful reflections. But awareness alone doesn’t create change. It’s what we do with these insights that matter. Let’s discuss how to transform these reflections into building blocks for your next chapter. I created a framework to help you move from reflection to action. I call it the SELF Method, an acronym to remind you of this journey back to yourself.

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

S – See your whole truth. Begin by honestly acknowledging what you've lost and what remains. Record your reflections: the strengths discovered through grief, patterns noticed, clearer values, and resurfaced dreams. This isn't just about cataloging pain, it's about recognizing the full spectrum of who you are emerging from loss.

Try keeping a mirror journal to document one truth about yourself daily for 21 days. One client lost her job after 25 years at the same company. In her mirror journal, she wrote, "I'm not just a marketing director. I'm also a storyteller, a mentor, a problem solver." Those insights became the foundation of her new consulting business.

E – Explore one small change. Transformation takes time. Choose one insight from your reflections and design a small, manageable step toward change. Perhaps your small change is saying, "I need to think about it," instead of giving an automatic yes when asked for favors, especially if you've been people-pleasing for decades. Slight changes compound into major shifts over time.

L – Listen to your resistance. When you feel yourself resisting change, get curious instead of critical. Resistance often contains important information. Ask yourself, "What am I afraid would happen if I made this change?" or "What part of my identity feels threatened?" Sometimes, what looks like procrastination is protection. Uncover what lies beneath these feelings.

F – Forward focus. Create a vision that pulls you toward your next chapter, rather than pushing away from pain. What are you moving toward, not just away from? Develop a personal mission statement that captures how you want to live now in light of grief. Place this statement somewhere you'll see it daily as a decision-making compass. One of my clients, who lost her sister, wrote: "I will live fully enough for both of us." Simple, but it guides every choice she makes now.

The SELF framework isn't just cleverly named. It's about finding your way back to yourself after loss has altered your self-perception. It honors the emotional work and practical actions needed for authentic reinvention. It acknowledges

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

that meaningful change requires inner reflection and outer steps. Honoring the past and creating the future.

Let's put this all together. Loss of a loved one, career, or friendship creates a mirror that reveals truths about ourselves we might never see. The reflections can be uncomfortable at first. They show our unacknowledged strengths, unhealthy patterns, and our remarkable capacity for renewal. But these reflections aren't just interesting—they are transformative when you use them as building blocks for your next chapter.

Remember the SELF framework: See your whole truth. Explore one small change. Listen to your resistance. Focus forward.

This isn't just about getting through grief. It's about allowing grief to reveal dimensions of yourself that will make your next chapter more authentic and aligned with who you are. As leaders, mothers, partners, and friends, we often pour so much into others that we lose sight of ourselves. Sometimes, it takes a significant loss to bring us back to ourselves. But when we are willing to look in that mirror.

So before I close today, I want to thank you so much for listening and leaving me your comments via email. Grief may be the hardest mirror we look into, but it's the most honest. When you're ready to see your reflection, all the strength, wisdom, and potential that's been there, you'll find that grief has not just changed you. It's revealed to you.

I invite you to try one element of the SELF framework. Start your mirror journal, explore one small change, or sit with your resistance without judgment. Small steps lead to profound transformation.

If this resonated with you, I'd love to hear about your journey. Reach out to share your story or ask questions. If you know someone struggling with their reflection after loss, please share this episode.

Ep #84: The Mirror Effect of Grief

Until next time, remember that the most beautiful reinventions often begin in our broken moments. Take care, our fellow trailblazers, creatives, and courageous ones. Have a beautiful week. Bye!

Thanks for joining us on *The Reinvention Lab*. If today's episode inspired you, don't forget to follow and share it with someone who's ready to turn their challenges into opportunities. Want to take your journey to the next level? Visit sandy linda.com/program and apply for coaching today. Together, we'll turn your story into a legacy. Until next time, keep moving forward with purpose, passion, and power.