

living grief your way

in the weeds of grief

*a guide for
grievors + those
supporting them.*



Support can look different on different days.

The Cambridge Dictionary explains the term *in the weeds* as an individual "with so many problems or so much work that you are finding it difficult to deal with something."

Sound familiar? While this term is seen most often in the restaurant world when wait staff get overwhelmed or behind, I think it works really well with grief too. Grief can sweep in and overwhelm us with tasks, emotions, feelings of overall newness of our situation, and so much more. We can definitely feel as though we are in the weeds.

Please gently remind yourself that being in the weeds doesn't mean we are too weak to handle things or that it will always feel this way.

This is just something that can happen to us humans as we are trying to cope with heavy things and figure out our unique experiences.

So, what do we do when we feel we are in the weeds? Well, the answer is not as cut and dry as we may hope. Often, we might need different things on different days. So this is a guide to help outline some ideas for grieving individuals and those who are looking to support them, so we can work on navigating what this might look like.

Please remember that this is an outline, and the best thing we can do is check in with ourselves or the person we are supporting to see what they want or need. But hopefully this gives us a way to start talking about and giving words to these tough experiences.

Breaking it down

So, we've acknowledged that we need different things on different days, but what does that mean exactly?

Let's take a moment to do a visualization together. Imagine that you have been hiking for quite a while, you don't have a map, so you are just following your gut, and your backpack is full of the different struggles and experiences of grief - so it's feeling quite heavy. You take a moment to pause in the midst of a field of weeds. You are tired, overwhelmed, and just looking for a rest.

Here you have some options:

Do you just need to take your heavy backpack off for a moment and rest? Do you want to do this alone or would you like to have someone with you?

It can be beneficial to take a break from our grief journey. Sometimes we want this break by ourselves to just rest and let down from everything we've been coping with. It's okay to just take some time to ourselves. Other times, we may really look forward to having someone there to help us learn how to take a break or even help take our mind off of things for a bit. Check in with yourself or the person you are supporting.

Note for griever:

How can you ask for support if you need a break?

Note for supporters:

You might want to offer the idea of doing something together, but also letting them know that you understand if they just need some time for themselves.

Do you need to sit down for a while?

Maybe we can't seem to take the weight of that backpack off, but we feel the need to stop "doing" for a bit and just sit with all of the grief weight we are carrying.

LIVING GRIEF
TO BE WITH
YOUR WEEDS



Try asking yourself, is this something you need to do alone? Taking time to journal, reminisce, meditate, etc. Take time to *be with* your grief.

Would you like someone to just come sit next to you and talk about the weight you are feeling? We know our grief can't be fixed, but it can feel really nice to have someone to just sit in the weeds with us. It gives us the chance to be heard, to talk through all we are experiencing. Sometimes it may even lead to working together to find a way to keep moving forward on our journey - but that's not always necessary. Sometimes we just need to talk.

Note for griever:

Please communicate what you need. It's okay to say, "I just need to talk." Or even ask, "Can you help me figure out what to do?" Letting them know how they can support you can be a really helpful direction in this unknown territory.

Note for supporters:

Sometimes people experiencing grief don't know what they need. It can be helpful to be open to just listening - to start off. From there, you may want to ask what they would like from your support, or even brainstorm together.

Do you need someone to help you up?

It can be tough to realize that we need a boost to help us stand back up, and it can also be tough to ask for that help. Nonetheless, you are a human and we are wired for connection. We are not meant to do everything by ourselves! So wipe out that idea that needing, wanting, and asking for help equals weakness.

Grief can be a heavy and tiring journey and the people around us are usually looking for ways to support us. Maybe that boost comes in the form of asking for help with tasks that feel overwhelming, or joining together to remember your person. It can even be asking someone to check in on us or to help get us connected to more support/services.

Note for griever:

We can get frustrated that people aren't just showing up in the ways we need, but sometimes all they need is direction. Sometimes we have to extend our hand out to them to let them know we need help up.

Note for supporters:

Many times people in grief feel like a burden. They understand that everyone else has lives they need to attend to, so many times they won't ask for the help they need. Please keep checking in and following up - letting them know your offers are genuine and sincere.

Do you need someone to help you find your way?

Would you like someone to help carry some of the heaviness in your backpack? Or maybe suggest a route to take in your journey? This is another great time to ask for help. Remember that idea that we are wired for connection? It applies here too. We don't have to walk this journey of grief alone. It's nice to feel like we have a hiking mate or that someone can take a bit of our load and help us to carry some of our experience. Remember, you've never been here before, so it's not necessary for you to just

LIVING GRIEF YOUR WAY



automatically know what to do or how to go about all of this. Sometimes it's nice to know we have someone there to help us learn as we go.

Note for griever:

When someone offers or agrees to help us, please continue to check in and make sure that you are getting help in the way you need. Supporters will do their best, but they can't know exactly what you need at all times. Make sure to keep an open line of communication.

Note for supporters:

There are times we may be absolutely certain we know what someone needs or what they need to be doing. Best practice is to still check in with your person and make sure that everyone is on the same page.

When you don't know what you need:

There may be times when you can't break it down for yourself or others. When asking yourself what you need, you may come up blank or with too many thoughts swirling around. That's okay, even if it doesn't feel like it. We don't have to have the

answer for everything.

Maybe you just allow yourself to be there, look around, see what is making you feel as though you are in the weeds, and then just take a few gentle deep breaths. It might sound strange, but sometimes doing nothing more than acknowledging that we are in the weeds can be comforting.

Note for griever:

This might feel scary and as if you have no control in the moment. Try grounding yourself in the moment. Notice things around you through sight, smell, noise, etc. Helping ourselves come back to the present can help our brains slow down.

Note for supporters:

This may not be a great time to push your person to "figure it out." Ask if you can just be there, or if they need some time to themselves, but then make sure you follow up in a bit to see what they need or how you can support them.

Getting through the weeds

Hopefully this has given you some ideas of how to think about these tough experiences that society may not really prepare us for. Whether we are going through the weeds ourselves or supporting someone who is, the key aspects to navigating these times are: checking in with ourselves, communicating both ways, and reminding ourselves and each other that we will not be stuck in the weeds forever.

After that, it's up to you to take it moment-by-moment and be authentic to what you are feeling, what you are able to give or receive, and what is needed while in the weeds or to help get out of the weeds.

Just like other journeys in life, it can be nice to know that there may be times when being in the weeds can feel familiar and you know exactly what to do!

LIVING WITH GRIEF
YOUR WAY



Humans are wonderfully resilient creatures and can build our resilience through our actions, self-care, and connection with others.

Note for supporters: Our society often teaches us

Platitudes such as "Well, I know you miss them, but at least they are in a better place now."

Positivity such as "I know you are struggling, but look at all of the wonderful things you have to be grateful for."

Silver linings such as "The silver lining in this situation is that you get to build a new life you will love."

Please know that it's okay to not always find a "bright side" to things and that it can actually feel more supportive to allow your grieving person to just be honest about how they are feeling. All of these comments above have good intentions, but they can feel very dismissive. We may feel the pull to "fix" things for them, but sadly, we cannot.

So just showing up and letting them show up as authentically as you both can - that's the real gift that you CAN give.