

The death industry

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This article is a follow on from the previous one - 45. Necrophobia

Healthy grief and neurotic grief

Over the years of working in the psychology and counselling industries I have found that a common source of racket feelings and a common source of rackets come with bereavement. The person who has lost a close loved one will tend to engage in racket feelings at some point in their grief. Sometimes this can go on for years and years. If someone says this is the anniversary of the death of "X" and they feel substantial grief for a significant period and its over 2 years ago then that is probably a racket. I have heard people say and feel such things and the loved one has been dead for 15 years!

Then you hear people say things like; "With the death of a child you never really get over it". Or if the death was complicated such as with a murder or suicide then some say that it is much longer grief process. This is most often a racket and does not have to be the case. The Child ego state in each of us is remarkably resilient and it does get over death and it moves on if allowed to.



When one is grieving then the vast majority of others will respond with

Nurturing Parent or Rescuing Parent ego states. If they don't then they will be quickly labelled by others as being uncaring, inconsiderate and so forth. To question if a person's grief has moved from healthy grief to neurotic grief is a risky venture indeed and one can come under fire from all angles by making such an assertion.

Grief and money

The tendency for people to get into racket feelings whilst grieving is also partly due to the death industry. This industry is worth billions per year and two of the main money makers are the undertakers and the grief counsellors. To exaggerate, highlight and draw out the grief feelings and processes makes these industries very wealthy. They want death to be bigger than "Ben Hur". Why? If there is one thing people will spend money on it's making themselves feel better. If they are in pain (physical or emotional) then they will go to great lengths to ease or stop that pain and that includes great financial lengths. So people will spend more on funerals and more on bereavement counselling if they can be convinced that their grief is bigger than it actually is. The vast majority of people are convinced of this, at least in western societies.

The messiah of grief counselling was Dr Elizabeth Kubler-Ross as it was she, who was the first to describe the grieving process in a clear and easily understandable way in her famous book, Death and Dying. This has been a tremendous financial windfall for grief counsellors around the world. We now have the STAGES of grief, and the theory is so constructed such that one has to progress through the stages before one has FULLY grieved. I can feel the dollar signs ticking over in my eyeballs as I write this now.



Now people can define which stages they have and have not completed and if they have fully or only partially grieved. Before that was not possible, it was more at a feeling level because there was not a theory by which the Adult ego state could assess the grieving process. Of course the newly defined grieving process can never be fully completed. It's a psychological theory for goodness sake! They are never possible to complete.

Secondary gain

Besides all the money to be made out of grief, there is a thing in psychology called, "secondary gain". If a young child gets sick then usually it will feel bad and want to get better. The youngster will also get to stay home from school, mother will make it bowls of chicken noodle soup and it becomes special in mother's eyes. The secondary gain of the sickness = no school, special treatment from mother and lots of strokes. Do these out weigh the physical pain of the illness? With some people, yes.

So the secondary gain from grief is you get treated as special, with warmth and caring, and you get time off work and everyone treats you as though you are in a delicate state. This is very appealing to some I think I can safely say.

This secondary gain can also happen inside the person them self. If someone has a strong internal critic inside their head then they will tend to drive themselves relentlessly and not allow self to have care and consideration. For some people they have what is known in psychology as an "allower" inside their head. That is a special set of circumstances when the internal critic will be turned off. In certain conditions they will allow themselves to do the nice things for self that they otherwise disallow for what ever reason. Often when grieving people will put an allower into play and thus the person gets the secondary gain of having self nurturing rather than self criticism.

How to make money? Become a grief counsellor

All this has led to massive over servicing in grief counselling. The tax payer pays out huge sums of money on such counselling that is unnecessary. I would estimate in Australia at this time some where around 50 percent of grief counselling is over servicing.

Grief is a normal human process. Grief is a finite thing. It comes to an end if the person allows it to. It is quite possible to drag out the grief process for many years and unfortunately they are considerable fiscal and emotional pressures to do precisely that.



Grief counsellors at an annual conference