

Touchstone #5 For Hope and Healing Your Heart; Recognize You Are Not Crazy
Adapted from: Understanding Your Grief by Alan D Wolfelt, PhD

Time distortion:

A common phrase among people who are mourning is: "I don't know what day it is, let alone what time it is!" Your inability to keep track of time right now is not crazy. It's common in grief, particularly in the early days and weeks following the death.

Re-thinking and re-telling the story:

Often when someone loved dies, you find yourself thinking about the circumstances of the death and the time immediately surrounding the death over and over again. You may also feel the need to tell other people about these prominent memories over and over again. This is not a sign of "going crazy". In fact, it is a sign that you are doing your work of mourning. By telling and re-telling your story, you are beginning to integrate it into your life. What has happened to you – the death of someone you love – is so hard to fathom that your mind compels you to revisit it again and again until you have truly acknowledged it and embraced its presence. Telling the story helps bring your head and your heart together.

Sudden changes in mood:

When someone you loved dies, you may feel like you are surviving fairly well one minute and in the depths of despair the next. Sudden changes in your mood are a difficult, yet natural part of your grief journey. Mood changes can make you feel like you are going crazy because your inappropriate self-expectation may be that you should follow a pattern of continual motion forward. In reality, grief twists and turns like a mountainous trail.

Powerlessness and helplessness

Your grief can leave you feeling helpless and powerless. While one part of you may realize that you had no control over what happened, another part of you feels a sense of powerlessness at not being able to prevent it. These feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in the face of this painful reality are normal and natural.

Linking objects

Linking objects are items that belonged to the person who died that you now like to have around you. Items such as clothing, books, knick-knacks, artwork can help you feel physically close to the person you miss so much.

If you like to hold, be near, look at, sleep with or even smell a special belonging of the person who died, you are not crazy. You are simply trying to hold on to a tangible, physical connection to the person.

You will probably need these linking objects less and less over time as you integrate the loss into your life, but you may always find some items special and want to keep them. Don't feel you have to rush into getting rid of the person's belongings. Do this at your own pace and in your own time.

Identification symptoms of physical illness

When someone you care deeply about dies, you sometimes develop new ways to identify and feel close to that person. One way is by relating to the physical symptoms of the person who died. For example, if she died of a brain tumour, you may have more frequent headaches. If he died from a heart attack, you may have chest pains. Of course, checking for organic problems is important, but you should also be aware that you might be experiencing identification symptoms of physical illness.

Remember, you are not crazy, you are grieving. The journey through the wilderness of your grief may bring you through all kinds of strange and unfamiliar terrain. Remind yourself of what to look for in your grief experiences and understand that what you are experiencing is, in fact, quite normal.

If you would like more information on any of our programs,
or would like to arrange for bereavement support for yourself or a family member, please contact:

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