

THE WILDERNESS OF GRIEF

By Tom Zuba

I'm going to come right out and say it.

If you are working with a therapist, counselor, social worker, grief expert, minister, priest, or anyone else who is trying to help you navigate the wilderness of grief and they start talking about Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' 5 stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance -- please, please, please do yourself a favor and run as far away from that person as fast as you can.

That "expert" does not know grief. Not really.

Grief is the internal, automatic response to loss. Everyone grieves. Everyone.

If you are alive and have attached to anything. Anything. A job. A pet. Your health. Your looks. Your house. A person. A certain lifestyle. Your car. Anything.

If you have attached to something and you lose that something, you grieve. Automatic. Internal.

And as much as I'd like to tell you that grief will be orderly, neat and tidy, predictable and unfold in 5 stages. It will not. Period.

Grief is wild, and messy and unpredictable and uncertain and ever-changing and unsettling and unnerving.

Most of us (all of us) are ill-prepared and ill-equipped to go with the flow of grief when it is our time because we never talk about it.

What it's like to live with grief?

So when grief does express itself in the often surprising and confusing ways it does, when all we want to do is sleep or we can't sleep at all; when we eat and eat and eat, or have completely lost our appetite (and wonder if we've lost our mind).

When we feel angry, confused, sad, anxious, desperate, frightened, lonely, nauseous, numb, dazed, dizzy (to name just a few of the ways grief expresses itself) seemingly at the same time. We are experiencing grief.

And when our arms physically ache to hold our beloved, when we have heart palpitations, stomach pains, and fight to keep our balance, we are experiencing grief. We think we are going crazy. We are not. We have entered the wilderness of grief.

And in order to get out, we must go through. Period.