

# STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

## Grief Edition

DEALING WITH GRIEF AND  
LOSS IN RECOVERY

### FROM NANCY

Words are insufficient and inadequate. I can only try to give you a view of my experience and an expression of the feelings that would continue to rise and fall during my process.

I lost my son Anthony to an overdose on May 7th, 2021. I was active in my own addiction when he went missing two days before. I was arrested the day before he was found. I was sitting in a jail cell when I was given the news that my son has passed away. I spent the next 46 days in jail and was then escorted to long term treatment 100 miles away from home for 7 1/2 months. I do not share this with you for sympathy. I share this to show you just how powerful this disease is and because I know I was placed in that jail cell for a reason. God only knows where I'd be had I not gotten arrested that day.

There is. And there was. There was shock. There is denial. There was abandonment. There is pain. There was the feeling of being lost. There is the journey of being found. There was breaking down. There is building up. There was a feeling that I had nothing left. There is a giving of myself. There was not knowing how on earth I was going to live without my son. There is honoring him everyday. Every single day.

My grief was very private at times and very personal. I spent a lot of time with myself but never alone. It didn't always feel that way but it became a practice to be able to sit with myself. To be able to sit with my feelings instead of in them. I learned how to be with myself, my higher self, with Anthony, and eventually with God.

I would have all of this internal dialogue with myself. I'd talk to Anthony, too. Specifically on a bench I would sit on every chance I could find at this treatment center. I'd look up to the sky and find the beauty in things outside. Before I knew it I realized I was starting to meditate. It was a slow process. And I was far from perfect. There was also a hill I would walk up. Some days faster than others. It's where I would cry, sob really, because it was private and I could really let go.

This one day I just looked up and said the words out loud, "I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do!"

I was so overcome with emotion. I fell to my knees. I knew I needed some source out there to help me. I had finally really reached out to a higher power for the first time. To me, God is Love. Love and connection were helping me get through my grief but I needed to say those words on that hill out loud. I can not say enough about the love and support I have received from people in the rooms. But I had to allow myself to receive it. I have also learned being vulnerable is necessary. Scary but necessary.

I miss Anthony everyday. Not a day goes by that I don't think about him. He simply was the best. I wasn't able to put it into words right away but I have received gifts through this devastating loss. I am more spiritual despite this or because of it. Anthony and I share an anniversary now. My sober date is May 7th, 2021. I choose to use that date to honor him a day at a time.



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## FROM VIC

Loss and grief has been such an illuminating experience in my life.

I lost my brother at 19.  
 I lost my step-father at 20.  
 I lost my best friends at 26 and 28.  
 I've lost friends in recovery.  
 I've lost family in recovery.

But the difference in my losses before recovery + while being in it is that now I don't feel as if I'm losing anything.

I am experiencing a physical absence and that can hurt, but the one thing grief and loss has shown me in recovery, is about my need for permanence and my need for control.

I don't like the idea of being caught off guard by huge emotions.  
 Especially ones that mean I can no longer have physical access to people I love.

The loss I feel in grief is control.  
 To save people with love.  
 To be stronger than God.

I can even fall into the tunnel of making the loss about me.

**MY** friend died.  
 I am hurting.  
 I lost this person.  
 I can't come to terms with this.  
 MY world is turned upside down.

Grief is an honoring of the last stage of physical love.  
 The loss isn't even about me.

I could get so lost in my grief I couldn't even show up for anyone else because I was so consumed by my own.  
 I don't believe we can teach people how to grieve.  
 But my personal experience is my ego shatters in the loss.

Whatever identification I had to the person now feels threatened and that role I played is now over.  
 Grief has always invited me deeper into myself.

Who am I in the absence of others?  
 The sister.  
 The step-daughter.  
 The best friend.

They were all roles I played. And with those losses the story ended. It felt like completion as opposed to a new beginning.



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The deeper I was attached to what I needed those relationships to be for me the more it hurt.

The more I was attached to what I meant in that persons life the more I played out the pain.

In some cases there was such a heavily exaggerated sense of importance that I couldn't even be objective about the grief.

Instead of honoring who I lost, grief became an avenue for me to play out the guilt I had about not showing up in that relationship the way I wanted to when they were living.

Even more so it could become the avenue where I needed to stress my super human powers about what I should and could have done more of to save them.

It wasn't about them anymore.

It became about me.

Grief repeatedly showed me how uncomfortable I was with discomfort.

Big feelings felt impossible.

They felt paralyzing.

Rather than feeling them I wanted to stay straight faced.

I didn't know how to be supported or comforted. I didn't know how to ask for love. I didn't know how to show vulnerability without feeling weak.

Recovery showed me that the ability to objectively feel, process and express feelings is strength not weakness.

Loss has defined me by breaking me to the truth of my dependence on the world around me, but my identity is independent from it. Loss can be an incredible teacher if you allow it to be. The losses I have experienced have taught me many lessons, but the top five I would like to share may be of use to someone who is hurting:

1. The origin of disturbance is always inside of me. If I resist anything in life, there is a part of me that has attached my value, or identity, to it; and when I resist, I feel threatened by the possibility of it changing or leaving. It always has and always will be within my power to make intentional and deliberate choices to seek and heal those disturbances so that I can walk through an experience as a witness and not a participant of the chaos that can come with loss.

2. Not everything you lose is a loss. As I got deeper into getting to know myself and seeking my truth, I realized I resisted some losses because of my fear surrounding my feelings of inadequacy and seeking validation from things outside of myself. After all, IN-security needs to be secured from inside of me. There have been many things I lost that never served me. Many experiences I perceived as losses have been in turn some of my biggest wins.

3. Nothing lasts forever. There is a Sanskrit word Aparigraha. It means non-grasping, non-greedy, non-possessiveness. It is the last of the eight limbs of yoga. It speaks to how we should interact with ourselves, others, and the world around us. The Buddha speaks about the root of all suffering being related to our attachment to things that are impermanent. I introduce these two concepts as an invitation to consider that our attachment to people, places, and things inevitably



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create immense suffering and pain if and when they are lost or left. Perhaps if we lived more in the moment and actively practiced gratitude we would have more peace and less pain.

4. Vulnerability now saves us pain later. In an interview with Oprah, author Brene Brown made two remarkably poignant statements that have stuck with me in this process: "When we lose our tolerance for vulnerability, joy becomes foreboding" and "we dress rehearse tragedy to beat vulnerability to the punch." These were WOW statements for me simply because they were so relatable. The first statement suggests that when we cannot be vulnerable in the moment with someone or something, the thought of joy immediately triggers this reflex of "oh my goodness what if something terrible happens and I lose this joy." When we relax into vulnerability, we can fully experience joy in a fully expressed way and there is no impending doom around the things that make us happy. The second statement suggests that we are so fearful of expressing vulnerability that we mentally develop a script for the performance we will put on when tragedy strikes so that we control the degree of vulnerability that we show. We live in a society that has left us in fear that we will be seen being vulnerable without our permission and it terrifies us.

5. You're not a victim, you are a volunteer. Loss happens. It doesn't happen to us. We recreate and carry out the narrative of loss in a way that feeds the ego into a perpetual state of misery and self-pity. I once had someone tell me, "I've never met someone who has experienced as much loss as you, yet you don't seem affected by it." Well that's just it. It was an experience. It happened and then time continued and so did my life. If I choose to dwell on this loss as if it was a personal occurrence orchestrated by the cosmos to cause me pain, then that will be the narrative that I continue to abide by. I become the volunteer, the martyr, the receiving end of unfortunate and tragic events. This also is how I continue to manifest, attract, and recreate these circumstances in my life.

Lastly, I would be remiss not to mention that the cure to the pain that comes with loss is deliberate, permissive, and unrestricted active grieving. I have experienced stages of grief, but I don't believe they all come in a one size fits all way. Grief is a deeply personal and exposing experience that should be met with grace and deep reverence. Personally, grief is the most vulnerable and unpleasant emotion I've experienced, which immediately leads me to believe that through grief and through loss I can have the most growth emotionally and spiritually.

The way in which I have grieved the losses I have experienced were the defining moments in how this loss would change me. Would I be softer? Would I be kinder? Would I be more grateful? Would I be bitter? Would I be guarded? Would I be angry? I do not extend grief to every loss I experience, but I sit with every loss that happens. Pain at times is inevitable. Suffering is optional. Grief is a decision. When I do not choose to grieve, there are only two reasons. One is avoidance and the other is a recognition of the universe clearing my path for me. When I am avoiding grief, I am actively avoiding growth. When I recognize my path is being cleared, I express gratitude.

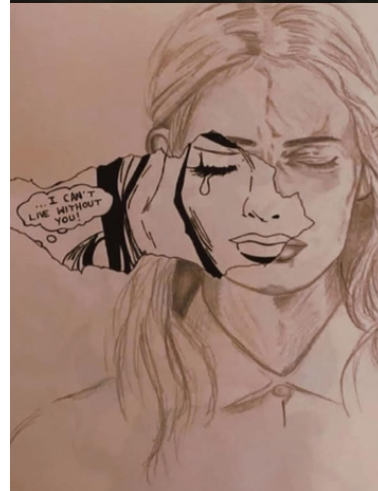
Loss, overall, I believe is an experiential process: An opportunity to come home to yourself and extend compassion and comfort to be ok with not being ok, to give permission for the process to unfold, to surrender repeatedly. Loss can be deeply healing. We can expose ourselves in moments of vulnerability when our hearts are open, and we can reach old wounds and help them heal while we heal over and over and over again. Loss is an everlasting reminder of the impermanence and the fragility of life. Loss is a bookmark in the book of life to remind us where there had been immense grace and immense mercy if we are willing to find the blessings in the bad things. Loss delivers the promise of peace when we yield. Loss is a doorway to awakening. Loss is a test of willingness. Loss is the opportunity for the silencing of the ego. A quote from Toby Mac states, "Rock bottoms will teach you lessons that mountain tops never will." Loss has been my rock bottom that laid the foundation from which I've built my life. Loss has been my greatest pain and immeasurably my greatest blessing.



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ART CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR MEMBERS



"THE HORSE'S MOUTH" IS A BULLETIN SENT BI-MONTHLY WITH THE PURPOSE TO MAINTAIN COMMUNICATION, OF OUR FELLOWSHIP'S GROWTH, KEEPING MEMBERS INFORMED OF RECENT HA BUSINESS, AND REQUESTING INPUT ON IMPORTANT MATTERS FROM MEMBERS.

TO INSPIRE OUR READERS AND ACKNOWLEDGE MILESTONES IN THIS JOURNEY, WE WOULD LIKE TO FEATURE YOUR STORY IN ONE OF OUR UPCOMING NEWSLETTERS. PLEASE SEND US A PERSONAL ARTICLE, ART, OR POEM, CONTAINING NO MORE THAN 400 WORDS, DEPICTING YOUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE WITH ADDICTION TO

THEHORSESMOUTH.HA@GMAIL.COM



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

**HA Area meets the third Thursday of the month at 9:30 P.M.  
@ Blue Point Bible Church**

**HELP OUR FELLOWSHIP GROW, HAVE YOUR  
VOICE HEARD & ENJOY FREE SNACKS**

## new meeting

"THE COMEBACK KIDS"  
7:30 P.M. - THURSDAY - HYBRID  
THRIVE RECOVERY CENTER  
1324 MOTOR PARKWAY, SUITE 102  
HAPPAUGE 11749



MEETING ID: 444 138 73459

LGBTQ+ MEETING - ALLIES WELCOME - SNACKS & REFRESHMENTS

### Traditions Corner

### NINTH TRADITION

**HA as such, ought never be  
organized; but we may create service  
boards or committees directly  
responsible to those they serve.**

