

## **Women and Grief: Navigating the Labor Pains of Life**

To grieve is to heal, shares Miriam Greenspan, in her honest and real book; Healing Through the Dark Emotions. Although, this statement speaks truth, those who have braved the depths of despair through grief may have lost vision of this notion. For in the chaos, which is filled with an overwhelming amount of energy and pain, we may sometimes forget that there is a metamorphosis taking place.

*There is a purpose in the pain.*

I was struck by the waves and intensity of grief a few years back, it began when I left my home and community. I grieved the death of a life that I once knew, I grieved for my children and I grieved for my home. I was starting to become undone, for that which I once identified with and that which created a sense of safety and purpose in my life was now gone. The physical relocation was the catalyst that brought me into contact with my first encounters with grief. This opened the flood gates as my heart and soul began to bleed; and from this place, I spiralled into my very own dark night of the soul.

We all carry a story and the grief of which I speak arises from these stories. Although so personal to you, it is the very experience that has brought you to your knees. Let me elaborate, when a life experience rattles your core, sometimes it is so overwhelming that you find yourself collapsing in humility to that which is beyond your comprehension - to the Mystery.

I am speaking to the kind of life experience that has put you face to face with an internal pain so great that words could never do it justice. Even in defining these kinds of life experiences, you lose something, something so sacred to your internal world. Words reduce and diminish the intensity of it all, and yet many find themselves searching for someone to listen to their story – without judgment or a need to change anything.

These pathways are pivotal to the growth and transformation process of our human heart and soul. Death, a natural cycle, provides us an experience that reminds us of our impermanence. It is not always a physical death that causes us to grieve, but could also be, the death of an identity, a belief system, a community, a relationship or a life as you once knew.

Each of these experiences speaks to us differently, and when we allow the pain of the loss to move through us, we come into contact with the precious experience of grief. In death, change is brought about; and in the pain and despair lives a gem that if surrendered to will transform you.

*I call this gem, grace.*

Many are so afraid of the pain of grief and despair. This can be understood by looking at our cultural norms as to how we deal with pain - numb, drug, and suppress. Yet it is the resistance to the pain that cultivates more pain. Grief ignored in my opinion, feeds the darker emotions (depression, shame, anger, fear, and guilt). I have come to learn that there is a way to navigate the unknown and untamed terrain that grief has on the heart and soul.

My journey led me down the path of tremendous loss in a rather short period of time. The loss of my home and community was just the beginning - each experience of loss, layered on top of the other cultivated an energetic weight so heavy, that it eventually caused me to collapse. The heaviness and pain combined became too much to bear.

I endured the loss of a 13 year marriage, simultaneously, a loss of my identity as a birth attendant as I faced my greatest fear, after attending the birth of a stillborn. Finding myself in an oppressive relationship that ended in great heart break that led me to wander the streets at night questioning where I would sleep and with whom? Finally, figuring out how to be a mother to my three children – as the mother I once knew, was no longer present within me.

In this pit of chaos, grief, and despair I engaged the underworld. I unleashed my sexual energy in ways that defeated me, I poured toxicity into my body in a manner that was so foreign and each day, I barely recognized this woman in the mirror. I hung up my honour and danced with darkness.

Where does one go when they can no longer tolerate the pain anymore? One must go deeper inside allowing the self to be broken open. This is exactly what I did as I could no longer fight the sensations of grief and pain, having never navigated these emotions before. The grief flooded my Being like a tidal wave, and engulfed all of me. Bare and stripped naked, challenged to face all that I knew and once identified myself as, I ventured into this unmarked territory with one key element – a determination to be transformed by the pain.

My life had become totally unfamiliar and my heart was for the first time, breaking open. Even though I was left drowning in my tears, praying for someone to save me, I knew all I could do was ride the waves of grieving contractions and go head on into the pain, with each breath.

There was no escaping, no drug that would stop the flow, there was only experiencing with an enormous amount of presence.

*Alone in my grief, as I let the waves ride me, I found my way.*

In this, I navigated what I will call, the labor pains of my life. As hopelessness blanketed me, I remembered the wisdom that my labors had taught me and each birthing mother had gifted me with. I recalled the teachings of my path – Quantum Midwifery – and I learned how to midwife my grief.

*I became the midwife for my own Soul's Birth.*

A voice within, the voice of the Midwife spoke to me, and whispered to my soul.

*“Surrender, Dear One and float above the pain”*

*“Ride the waves and let them overwhelm you”*

*“You are never alone, many have gone before”*

*“There is a way through, let the contractions take you away”*

*“Stop thinking, experience in total let go”*

*“I know it is painful, there is purpose in the pain”*  
*“Transformation happens from an altered state of consciousness”*  
*“Allow yourself to become undone, you will be okay”*  
*“Trust the process my Love”*  
*“Fighting the sensations creates more pain”*

In the darkness of my despair and literally, gut wrenching pain of my heart’s cry, I learned to surrender in ways unimaginable. I was carried away by Angels. And I trusted in that which was beyond my mental and egoic grasp.

The power and courage that stems from slaying the dragon of Grief is miraculous indeed, and forever with you. What I have learned is that grief is a gift for transformation, if received in her fullness. To be the Witness and the Midwife of your own soul’s journey is to know the magical power of the Feminine force which lies in us all.

You are never alone and although you will feel such aloneness, know that millions have gone before and this wisdom and power is always available. And so, I leave you with some words of comfort:

**“There is a descent to a state of death in life. We look and feel dead, but something is happening under the skin-if we let it. The mask of the old self is dying-harbinger of resurrection... The dark, enclosed place of the cocoon is necessary for metamorphosis to complete itself” - Miriam Greenspan.**

By: Jennifer Summerfeldt B.A.

Jennifer is offering a unique service combining her skills from the undisturbed birthing paradigm, sport psychology/peak performance, and conflict resolution along with, her own personal soul’s journey into the world of dark emotions and grief.

She is a mother of three children (all birthed at home), who brings 11 years of experience in studying the physiology of birth and working as a doula and birth attendant. Her education stems from graduate studies in the arena of Sport Psychology and Peak Performance, Quantum Midwifery (traditional apprentice based spiritual midwifery), and over 8 years as a childbirth educator.

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