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THE BIOLOGY OF GRIEF & GRIEVING

Towards humanity, intelligence,
and personal peace

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ABOUT

Grief is an individual and collective human experience. For each of us grief holds the power to awaken our spirits, deepen our capacity for compassion, and illuminate the path towards personal mastery and regeneration. Despite these benefits, grief can be a steep, destructive, and often frightening process-- one all of us eventually must navigate.

This publication highlights the major stages and symptoms of grief in its aim to support individuals and communities through the grieving process.

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What's the point of grief?

Grief is often seen as an unpleasant and painful process, yet from a spiritual and evolutionary perspective, it enables deep transformation and personal growth.

4 spiritual benefits of grieving

Opening - While grief stems from loss, it also expands our heart's capacity for compassion, making one more open to love—not just personal, but universal love.

Deepening – Grief often opens or strengthens our awareness that we're not alone in this life. It also strips the illusion of control, therefore bringing us into the awareness of the divine in us.

Purifying - In many spiritual traditions, sorrow is seen as a fire that burns away ego, illusions, and attachments, leaving behind a clearer sense of self and purpose.

Understanding - Grief expands our intelligence. It helps people become more attuned to subtle energies, synchronicities, and intuition, increasing their awareness of the unseen, multi-dimensional reality of life.

What's the point of grief? (continued)

3 evolutionary benefits of grieving

Emotional intelligence - Processing grief teaches the nervous system how to handle deep emotions, increasing emotional intelligence and adaptability over time.

Collective bonding – In human evolution, shared grief has strengthened communities by deepening social bonds and reinforcing empathy, ensuring survival through mutual care.

Personal growth – Loss forces an identity shift, pushing people to evolve beyond their previous self-concept and embrace new roles, perspectives, and deeper wisdom.

Every man casts a shadow; not his body
only but his imperfectly mingled spirit.

 This is his grief.

Let him turn which way he will, it falls
opposite to the sun; short at noon, long at
eve. Did you never see it?

Henry David Thoreau

Understanding acute grief

Acute grief is the intense immediate response to loss. It is often marked by overwhelming waves of sadness, confusion, or even physical discomfort. It can feel all-consuming making it difficult to focus on daily tasks or engage with others. This early stage requires our reasoning and intellectual capacities (IQ) in order to navigate our way through the following:

Physical symptoms – Fatigue, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, or even physical pain (like a heavy chest or stomach discomfort).

Intense emotions - Sudden, overwhelming sadness, crying spells, or even moments of anger and despair that come in waves.

Violence towards others - verbal, emotional, psychological or physical abuse and violence towards self or others.

Cognitive fog – Trouble concentrating, forgetfulness, or feeling mentally "disconnected" from reality.

Social withdrawal -- Some people isolate and simply cocoon in order to process their loss.

Embracing our unprocessed sorrow

Unprocessed grief is grief that lingers beneath the surface. It often manifests as emotional numbness, irritability, or a persistent sense of emptiness. Instead of openly mourning, a person may unconsciously suppress their feelings, leading to patterns of anger, avoidance, chronic fatigue, or difficulty forming deep emotional connections. Over time this unresolved grief can resurface in unexpected ways—through violence towards others, anxiety, depression, heart disease and other physical illnesses, as well as strong emotional reactions to minor triggers—signaling that grieving is incomplete.

Chronic irritability or emotional numbness – The person may either be easily triggered into frustration or appear detached, feeling little joy or sadness.

Persistent physical ailments – Unresolved grief can manifest as headaches, chronic fatigue, body tension, heart disease, or autoimmune flare-ups.

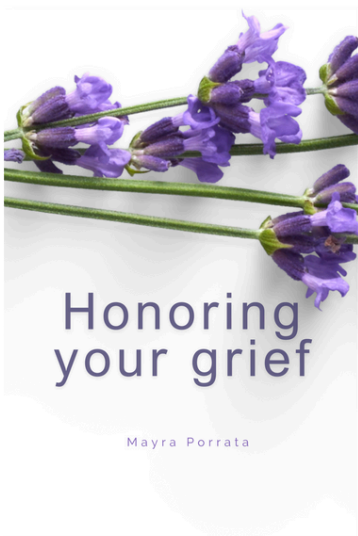
Difficulty forming or maintaining deep relationships – There may be a pattern of avoiding emotional intimacy, fearing loss, or struggling with commitment.

Repetitive or unexplained triggers – Unexpected strong reactions to minor events, like anger, anxiety, or sadness when something unconsciously reminds them of their loss.

Where are you in the grieving process?

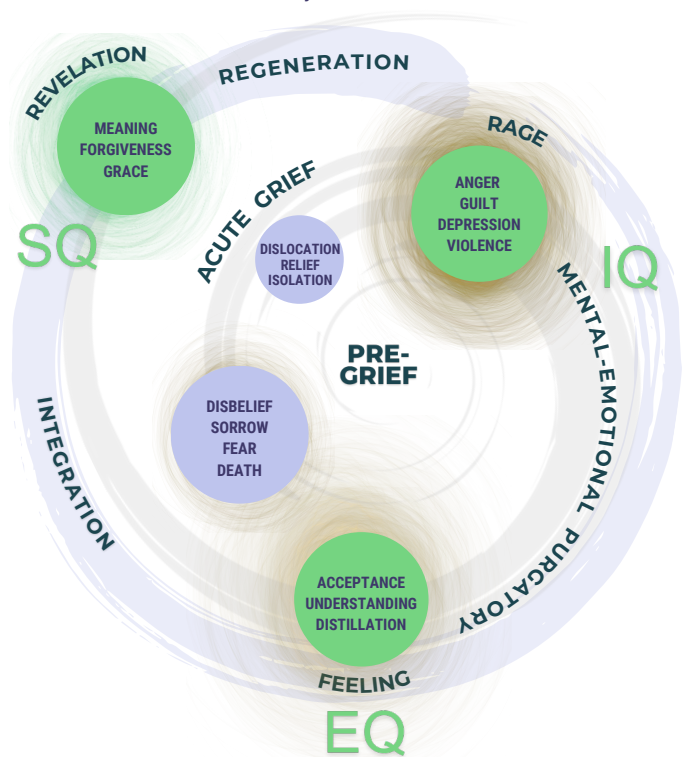
Embedded in grief's luminous and expansive landscape, we encounter physical, emotional, mental, and energetic (spiritual) phenomena. Without a map it's easy to get angry, discouraged, or lost.

1. PRE- GRIEF
2. ACUTE GRIEF
3. CAREGIVER'S PATH
4. RAGING
5. MENTAL-EMOTIONAL PURGATORY
6. FEELING
7. INTEGRATING
8. REVEALING
9. REGENERATING



BIOLOGY OF GRIEF

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See *Honoring your grief*, Solara Publishing, 2025 for descriptions of each stage

The examination and processing of our grief has nothing to do with morality, but with **revealing the inherent goodness** (benevolence) and wisdom already present in you.

How do we know we're done?

As a collective experience, grief is so ubiquitous we don't often notice its presence in the lives of our friends, neighbors, or leaders, but grief is the common ocean you and everyone you know must swim through—the passage that awakens us to the shadow aspects of all human life.

In many ways, grief-work is soul work-- the integration of our present human journey with the invisible realm of our divine existence. When people have gone through their grieving process you may notice the following in yourself or others:

- They're not angry with God/life
- Victim patterning is released — they accept/own their loss and are no longer re-living the past
- They're no longer confused about why something happened
- They don't talk about the pain or loss, but more so the lessons and insights
- They want to help others
- They're at peace
- They find joy in living and being

Grief ends when we end the wars within us. Grief ends when we understand its meaning and our sacred purpose. Grief ends when we're at peace with ourselves.

Mayra Porrata

Towards radical humanity

Reminding ourselves and those we love that they're worthy, benevolent, and capable is the first step in reframing everything that now separates us and encourage our acceptance of grief's wisdom as *divine software* every single one of us are invited to integrate.

It's easy to argue logic, dogma, or beliefs but that will never help us through our grieving, in fact, it only keeps us stuck in its swirls. As you navigate the landscape through your grief it's important to keep your focus and attention on that which ***you*** love-- that is the only way through it.

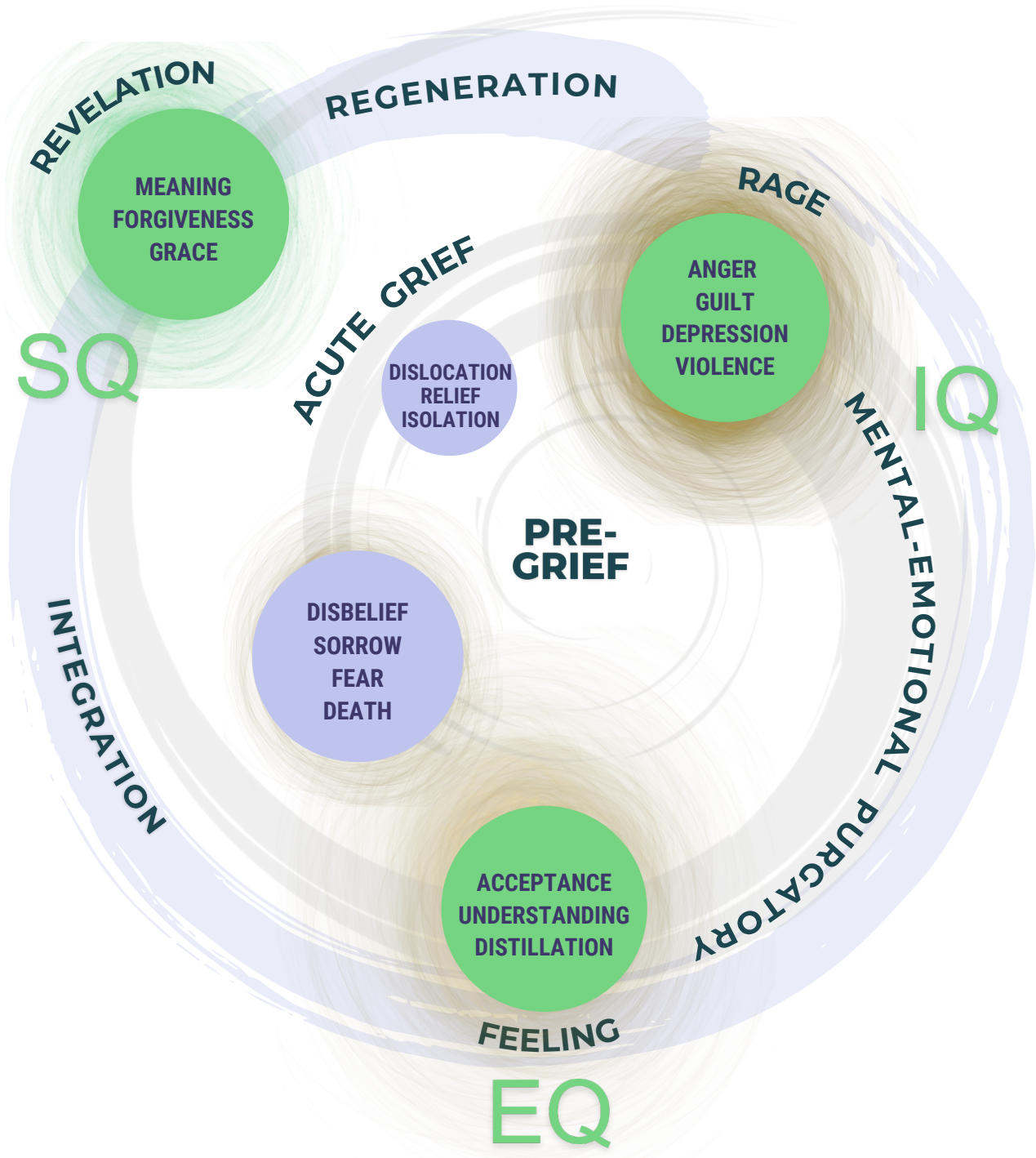
Life is love itself.

Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become your greatest ally in your life's search for love and wisdom.

Rumi

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Those who have
successfully navigated
grief's complicated terrain
know that it doesn't
respond to reason-- its
single requirement is that
it be felt and understood.

