



Disenfranchised Grief and Depression

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Disenfranchised grief is grief experienced by an individual that is not openly acknowledged, socially validated or publically observed. The loss experienced is real, but survivors are not accorded the “right to grieve” by anyone around them. An individual may have an intense and multifaceted reaction to a loss, yet those around him are completely ignorant or invalidating about the sadness that person may feel. Society at large simply is not comfortable with grief and for the most part completely ignores many instances of grief.

Some examples of disenfranchised grief are:

- 1) Loss of a pregnancy due to miscarriage
 - a. People say stupid things like “you can always have another baby.”
- 2) Loss of a pregnancy due to abortion
 - a. There is no public venue and complete lack of permission to grieve the loss of voluntary pregnancy termination
- 3) Loss of a child in an adoption process
 - a. Complete lack of understanding by society at large
- 4) Loss of an ex-husband or ex-wife
 - a. People say, “Wow! You should be glad they are out of your life now!”
- 5) Break up of a gay couple
 - a. Complete lack of acknowledgement by society as a whole

When a person is in a disenfranchised grief circumstance, they are unable to process the emotions involved in that loss. They will do this usually completely alone and with no support system. The grieving process is always best done in community. It is important for others to share the tears and the pain of the loss. Yet in the instances mentioned above, parties involved in these losses are completely abandoned and isolated in their pain.

While there is a great movement of grief support groups in our nation, even those are probably not going to touch on the above mentioned losses, unless someone finds their special niche of group. They are available but sometimes hard to find.

The grieving process can be a long, difficult and painful process. The ideal way to grieve, again, is to have someone walk that valley of pain with you. It is the isolation and the abandonment that heaps even more coals of pain onto one's heart in a disenfranchised grief situation.

Without validation and confirmation from another person, the emotions of sadness get pushed down. Eventually a person with disenfranchised grief will find themselves with a full blown case of depression.

Some common signs of depression are:

- 1) Lack of interest in things that used to bring joy
- 2) Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning
- 3) Sluggish, tired feeling
- 4) Unable to sleep or restless sleep
- 5) General feeling of sadness
- 6) Crying spells
- 7) Feeling fearful

Disenfranchised grief needs community for healing. If you are suffering from depression caused by disenfranchised grief it is important that you find someone to walk the valley of sadness with you. You can either find a professional who is trained in grief counseling or find the particular support group that would pertain to you. At the very least, it is important for you to find a friend who could listen to your story and who would be a safe place to cry with you.

Take the Depression Quiz on www.missingpieces.org by going to the navigation drop down bar and choosing "Depression Quiz."