



BAD GRIEF

In contrast to good and healthy grieving, **“bad grief” is a process we go through that prevents, or gets in the way, of healthy grieving.** Bad grief is usually a bi-product of being raised by or surrounded by people who taught us unhealthy ways to deal with grief, losses, and emotions. Many people grow up in homes where it does not feel safe to openly grieve. If your home has or had any of the following characteristics, you probably didn’t feel safe to share your grief reactions:

- Parents did not listen to you when you spoke
- People interrupted you when you were trying to express your feelings
- People laughed or made fun of you when you honestly shared your feelings
- People labeled you as a “cry baby”, “sissy”, or “mama’s boy” when you cried
- You were told to “suck it up” or to “grow up” or to “just get over it”
- People talked behind your back or violated your confidentiality
- People exploded, yelled, threatened, or became violent

Just thinking about the characteristics of an unhealthy emotional climate can trigger some unpleasant memories. But if you stop for a moment to realize the impact people had on your emotional development, you may be surprised by all the messages you carry around inside you regarding your feelings and what you do with them. Grieving can be quite difficult when:

- People pretend the loss never occurred.
- People get upset with you when you talk about your lost loved one
- Families remove all signs from the home that your loved one even existed
- Families keep everything the same and keep “their room” like a shrine
- **When have you had a hard time grieving the loss of a loved one?**

When we do not have healthy emotional outlets or emotionally healthy relationships, we will likely hang onto our grief and arrest our development. **Yes, people do not usually grow when we have unresolved grief issues.** We don’t keep growing when we won’t allow ourselves to feel and deal with our losses. We get stuck in the muck of grief, and we don’t know how to get out. And then we wonder why we’re always sad and depressed. We wonder why people don’t want to be around us anymore. We wonder why we are even getting up and doing life anymore. What’s the point?

Whether we like it or not, people around us have already discovered that we stopped growing. People notice when we are miserable. People know when we are not fun to be around. Not only have we sucked the life out of ourselves, we’ve also sucked the life out of those around us.

So what do we do when we realize we have “bad grief?” Well, we have two options. We can stay stuck in our grief, or we can begin taking some risks by acknowledging and dealing with our losses. More than likely, God has placed some caring people around us who are willing to bear our burden and shoulder our tears. But we have to let caring people help us grieve. God also offers us an invitation to come to Him with all our grief and sorrows. Jesus came to bear all our sorrow and grief. He knows and completely understands us. He made us with tear ducts and emotions to express our love and sorrow. In fact, you might be surprised what happens when you allow your emotions to breathe again. You might have more life. You might have more energy. When you stop blaming God, people, or yourself for unexpected losses, you might start blooming and growing again. You may start hanging out with bloomers and growers. And you might not have as much time and energy to spend with miserable mopers who sucked the life right out of you. **You might enjoy growing up again!**

“Health Talks” are designed to help us learn to talk and deal with one another in ways that build understanding and a healthy, growing, supportive, Christian community.