

Grief Insights

A compassionate guide for navigating the first year of loss



By Dionne Powell and Julie Foster

Welcome

About Julie Foster

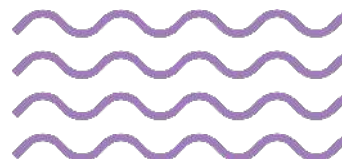


Julie Foster is a highly skilled, experienced counsellor, supervisor, and coach offering bereavement counselling privately, in a hospice and for a national bereavement charity. Her approach focuses on empowering clients through self-awareness and creativity. With extensive experience, Julie provides an empathetic and professional space to navigate grief and loss. She uses creativity in her work as a central strategy to support her clients.

About Dionne Powell



Dionne Powell is an inclusive women's (and children's) counsellor specialising in grief and anxiety. She offers compassionate counselling integrated with mindfulness and other calming techniques such as coaching, breath work, and tapping. She aims to support her clients throughout therapy with strategies to regulate overwhelming feelings as well as to navigate the challenges of coping with grief. Dionne works face to face from Malvern, and online. You can read more at www.mymindfulcounsellor.com





Dear Reader,

Firstly, please accept our deepest condolences for your loss. Grief is a profoundly personal journey. While no two experiences are alike, you are not alone, in facing the overwhelming challenges that come after losing someone very close.

Secondly, we would like to thank you for requesting this guide about navigating the early years of bereavement.

The guide was written by Dionne and Julie, both private bereavement therapists, who met whilst volunteering for a National Bereavement Charity. We wanted to share our skills and get together to create resources, workshops and retreats for our private clients and others to help them to gain insight about their grief with the hope they would feel less worried and/or alone.

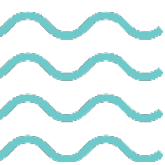
And so our creative and therapeutic Grief Retreats, Grief Insights Workshops and this guide, were all born. We hope the guide succeeds in offering you gentle, practical support, and guidance. It draws on the foundational insights of J. William Worden and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, along with our own experience and research.

We hope you find something helpful here, to come back to every day.

Our next therapeutic Grief Insights group workshop will be held on the 20th September 2025, at Belbroughton Village Hall, near Birmingham and Worcester (10am-4pm). Early Bird discounts are now available at £80 (instead of £95). Spaces are limited to 20, so please get in touch if interested (contact mymindfulcounsellor@gmail.com). The workshop will be a bit creative, a bit sociable, a bit relaxing and very therapeutic, being led by us, two specialist grief counsellors. We hope and expect for you to leave feeling greater hope, having processed some of your grief, feel more able to calm your emotions when distressed and to know more about what's happening to you.

With empathy and our care,

Dionne and Julie





Grief Insights Guide

Grief changes everything. In the wake of losing someone you love, the world can feel unrecognisable. *Grief Insights* is here to gently accompany you through your first year, offering simple tools, reflections, and ideas to support healing and honour the one you've lost.

This free guide is also a gateway to our workshop, designed to deepen your understanding about your grief.



1. Understanding Grief

Grief is not a condition to be cured, but a natural, multifaceted process. It manifests emotionally, physically, spiritually, and relationally—and rarely in a straight line.





It can bring sadness, anger, guilt, numbness, and unexpected moments of joy. These are not just stages that are completed in a neat and ordered process. Grief feels more like mixed up unpredictable waves to move through, very much in your own time and in your own way.

Grief is in fact shaped by who you are, your relationship to the person you've lost, and the culture and context in which you grieve. There is no “right” way to grieve.

Tip: Acknowledge every emotion as valid. There is wisdom in your response, even if it feels chaotic. Avoid comparing your grief to anyone else's.

2. Navigating the First Year

The early days of grief can feel like survival. This first year often includes “firsts” that sting—birthdays, holidays, anniversaries. Give yourself permission to do less, so you can hold and feel more, without overwhelm, and of course let go of any and all expectations.



If you're caring for children or teens at the same time, the emotional load can be heavy. It helps to speak openly about grief and to find healing routines in nature, art, or movement—together if you can.

Wisdom: You're not broken—you're adjusting to a deep rupture. Rest is productive. Slowness is strength. It really will help you in the long run. You may find you to be busy as avoidance to numb intensity. Just notice what you do and do what you feel you need to. Trust that you will know what you need. Sometimes we have to meet a short-term need over longer-term ones but you will find more peace to rest and be still, in time. Be gentle with yourself.

3. Common Reactions

Everyone grieves differently, but you may recognise:

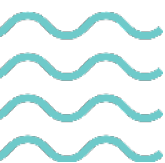
- Sadness – A hollow ache, weeping, or deep fatigue.
- Anger – Directed inward, outward, or nowhere at all.
- Guilt – "What ifs" and "if onlys" that replay endlessly.
- Confusion – Feeling detached or unable to focus.

These responses are normal. You're not alone in them.





Support idea: Counselling, grief groups, or compassionate friends can offer relief simply by listening. Talking and expressing these feelings in safe ways, is a step of processing the grief. You may need support whilst feeling these emotions as they are intense. Try to find groups or supportive people such as a therapist or support group to be with if that is supportive in your pain.



4. Helpful Practices

Nature:

Spend time in green spaces. Walking, sitting, or simply observing the seasons can calm the nervous system and offer perspective and insight.



Moving

Releasing adrenalin and nervous emotion through movement is really supportive. Gentle walks or swimming for example may help you sleep better too as well as avoiding isolation.

Mindfulness & Meditation:

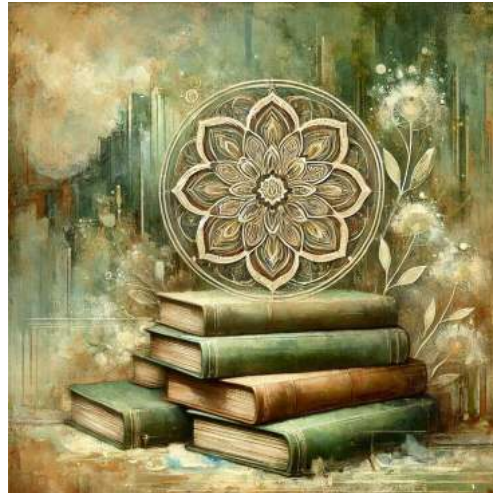
Simple breathing techniques can ground you in moments of overwhelm. Focus on your breath to create a pause so you can stay as regulated as possible whilst still allowing feelings to rise.





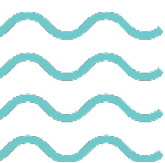
Journaling:

Write to release. Some find it helpful to write letters to their partner, note memories, or express emotions that are hard to say aloud. This helps the brain to process and accept loss and the difficult feelings you will no doubt be experiencing.



Creative Expression:

Try painting, music, or collage. These allow grief to flow without needing words and can yet still express your feelings.



5. Supporting Children and Teens

Children grieve in different ways than adults. You might see sadness, withdrawal, or anger—often shown through behaviour. Grief looks a bit like 'jumping in puddles of sadness' and back out again. Children do not stay sad long but that is not to diminish the way they process sadness, loss and grief. Try to accept their method of grieving as being appropriate to their age and stage of understanding and development.

Create regular opportunities for them to talk or create. Nature walks, drawing, and open-ended questions (“How are you feeling about...?”) can help them express what’s inside. There are great books for children around loss too.



Reminder: Routine and moments of joy are healing. Children need hope and relaxation just as much as they need space to grieve.



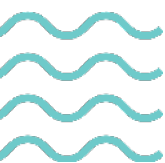
6. Relationships and Connection

Grief changes your relationship with others—and yourself. Some friendships may fade as you feel abandoned, judged, misunderstood or just distant from them. Others may deepen - often unexpected people turn out to be just the people you need to be around and to have great insight and kindness.

You may crave solitude or feel isolated even among people.

Be honest about what you need. Communicate clearly. And let yourself be surprised: new bonds often grow from shared loss. Suffering really does unite humans in their shared experience and empathic understanding of one another.

Insight: Allow space for both connection and disconnection. Both are part of healing.



7. Spirituality and Meaning



Whether or not you follow a faith, spiritual questions often arise in grief. You might sense your loved one's presence in nature, dreams, or quiet moments.

Creating rituals—lighting a candle, walking the same route, talking aloud—can bring peace and continuity.

Practice: Notice where you feel closest to them. Visit that space. Make it a sanctuary.

8. Cultural Wisdom and Rituals

Grief is universal, but how we express it is cultural. Some cultures weep together, some cook, some sit quietly. Learning about other traditions can inspire you to shape your own way of remembering.

Idea: Borrow what soothes you—songs, stories, altars, meals. Let your rituals evolve.

9. Moving Forward

“Moving on” is not required. But moving forward—carrying your person with you while finding new meaning—is possible.



Small goals, gentle plans, new aspirations—they come in time. Grief carves a space in you. What fills it can be purpose, creativity, even joy.

Hope: Love doesn't end. It changes form. You can live with loss and still live fully. Try not to worry about your future in the sense of it feeling hopeless. Things change and as counsellors we journey through the stages of hopeless to new hope. We can offer you reassurances of the stories of many others we have worked with who do find hope but it is gradual so be gentle and find support whilst you find your hope.

Want to know more about our workshops?



If this resource has resonated with you, we invite you to deepen your journey.

The Grief Insights Workshop is a supportive, nature, mindfulness and creative based day long workshop designed especially for those who have lost someone dear, in their first few years of grief. You'll explore creative practices, connect with others, and find new ways to honour your loved one while caring for yourself.

Early Booking Bonus: Having spaces booked in advance allows us to plan more effectively for numbers, so if you are able to book within a week of your download, we can offer an Early Bird discount. Visit www.mymindfulcounsellor.com to learn more.

Final Words

Grief is not something to fix. It is something to tend, like a garden and it takes time sometimes. Be kind to yourself. Lean on others. Trust that healing is happening—even when it feels like standing still.

With compassion,

Dionne and Julie

My Mindful Counsellor / White Hart Therapies

Additional Resources

For further reading, consider exploring books such as [A Grief Observed by C.S. Lewis](#) (click to buy book) or by [Megan Devine. It's OK That You're Not Okay](#)



Need more support?

For more information, or if you simply need to talk, please contact us via:

Dionne: mymindfulcounsellor@gmail.com or 07843 544009

Website: www.mymindfulcounsellor.com



Healing is a journey... Working through grief takes time. We are here to support you every step of the way. Whether individually or by joining our supportive workshops or retreat community, know that you deserve gentle care and understanding.

Remember, grief is the price we pay for love—and within that love lies the potential for a new beginning.

With heartfelt compassion,

Julie Foster & Dionne Powell