

Grief: Not Just Physical Death

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MY SISTER'S KEEPER

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WHAT IS GRIEF?

GRIEF: THE MISUNDERSTOOD EMOTION

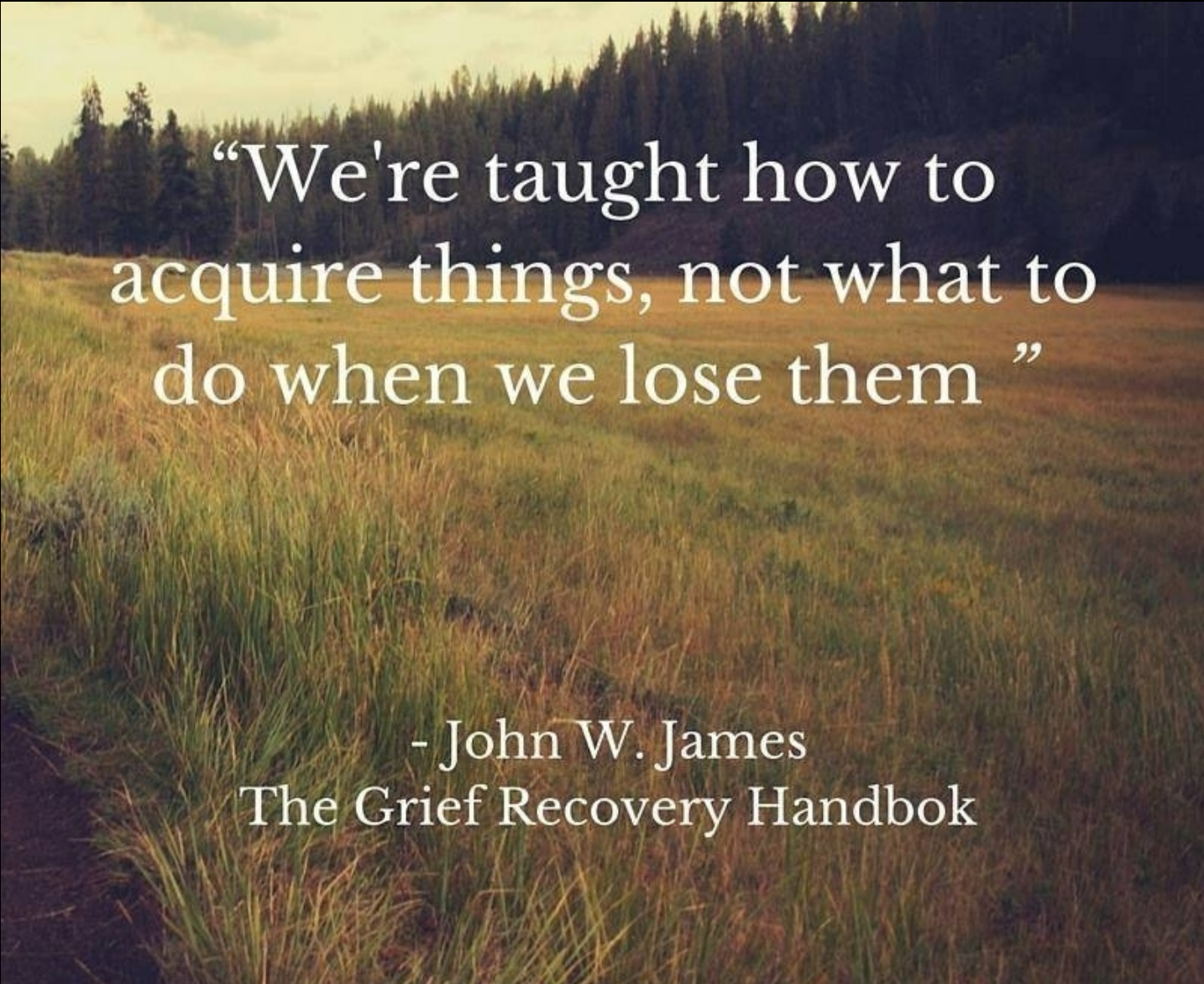
Most often we understand grief by the physical death of a person. Grief is far more than that. Death is just one of the things that cause grief. Grief applies to the loss of anything important to us, that brings pain or change in our lives.

How we process, adjust and adapt to those losses is how we experience grief. There is no time frame to grief and it is as individual as our fingerprint. Grief can take us through a myriad of unpredictable emotions. In essence, grief can accompany any change in life we go through. Change or anything we can consider is a death. It is the loss of something we hold close and value. Even though we move forward through the grief process and gain something new, the loss cannot be replaced.

WHAT WE GRIEVE

- Career changes
- Roles and responsibilities
- Health
- Independence
- Relationships
- Friendships
- Financial status
- Security
- Youth
- Life transitions
- Relocation
- Children growing up
- Lost dreams and plans
- Betrayal/Loss of trust

WHY DO WE MASK OUR GRIEF AND PAIN?

A photograph of a field of tall grass with a forest in the background. The grass is a mix of green and yellow, suggesting it might be late summer or early autumn. The forest in the background is dense with evergreen trees. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

“We're taught how to
acquire things, not what to
do when we lose them ”

- John W. James
The Grief Recovery Handbok

MASKED GRIEF

Masked grief occurs when we ignore or deny the impact of our loss by suppressing the feelings of our emotional pain. We hide behind or mask the symptoms of our grief, until we ourselves no longer recognize them or our maladaptive behaviors. When we mask our grief, we conceal the pain or assign the emotions to something or someone else; thus always hiding behind what needs to be unveiled, uncovered and unlayered. When we mask our grief, we become so adept that often we are oblivious to our own behaviors. We do ourselves a disservice because we deny how we really feel and withhold our emotional expression. We fake it to make it so much so that we can no longer identify when we are faking it and when we are making it.



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STRONG BLACK WOMEN WEAR THE MASKS

- This 'strong black woman' mask is one that scores of black women wear to cope with life's challenges and crises. We show great strength in the face of adversity. We hold down two or three jobs, some as single parents with the sole financial and emotional responsibility of looking after our children. Often, we take on other unpaid caring responsibilities in the family. However, this is at an emotional cost for many black women.
- <https://www.mentalhealthtoday.co.uk/blog/awareness/how-i-removed-my-strong-black-woman-mask>

WHY WE MASK

- To avoid showing weakness
- To avoid getting hurt
- Lack of confidence
- Comparing yourself to others
- Conflict avoidance
- Miscommunication
- Social Expectations
- Fear of consequences
- **STRONG BLACK WOMAN!**





- **Emotion buildup**
- Anger
- Relationship Strain
- Stress
- Illness
- Death

WHAT LIES BEHIND THE
MASK

REMOVING THE MASK

- Acknowledge your true feelings
- Share your feelings honestly
- Share your feelings with trusted sources
- Reach out for help
- Mindfulness
- Journal your emotions
- Seek therapy
- Enhance communication skills
- Sharpen conflict resolution skills
- Practice in spiritual practices
- Practice emotional mindfulness





GRIEVE UNMASK BE FREE!

Grief

If I've learned anything about the mourning process, it's that it can be drastically different for everyone at different stages of their lives & each loss is unique to each person. Whether it's loss of a loved one, or the loss of innocence, career, or even money-

Grief can free you, or consume you; deaden your emotions, or be a cathartic experience; turn you into something you never meant to be, or show you who you really are. It can be your reason to do better, or excuse to be worse. You can make the loss matter, or have it wasted- the only one who can choose is you.

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