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Coping with Grief: The Ball & The Box

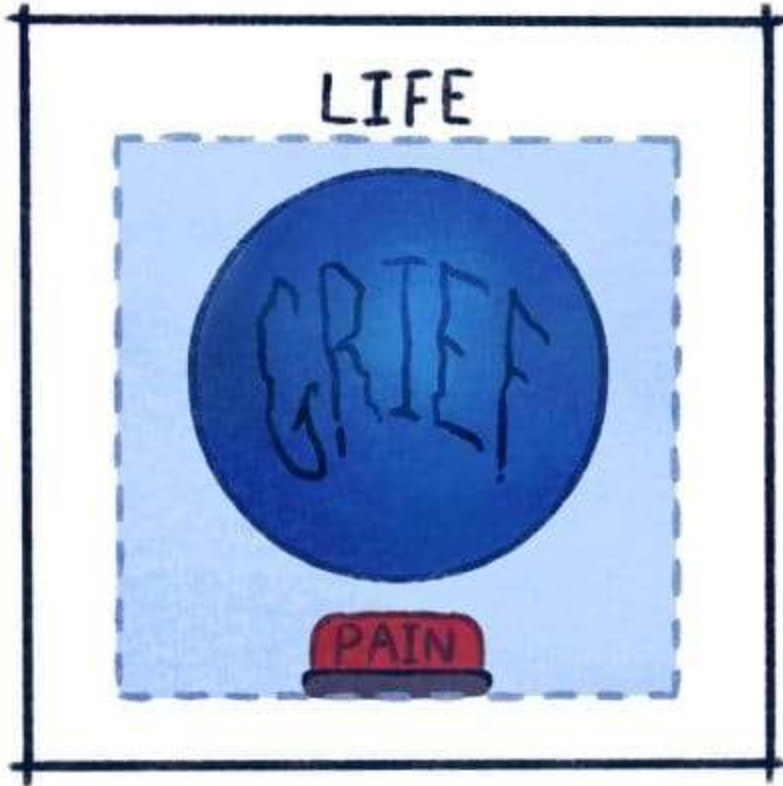
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~ 2 min read

Grief strikes each person in a different way. When we lose someone we love, that loss can hit us hard, all at once. Or it might lie in waiting until weeks or even months have passed before rearing its dark head.

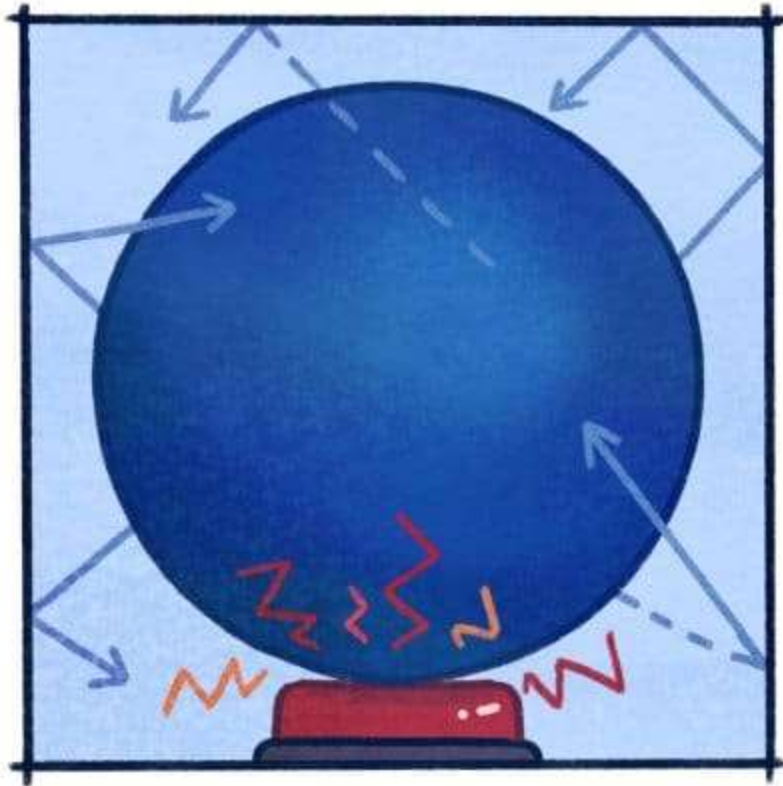
One of the things that might be difficult to understand is that for most people, the grief of a loss never leaves a person completely. The loss stays with most of us forever. It changes over time — it may start off as huge and overwhelming, but becomes smaller over time.

I came across this analogy on Twitter (by [Lauren Herschel](#)) about how grief is felt by many people and thought I'd share it with you.

Imagine your life is a box and the grief you feel is a ball inside of the box. Also inside the box is a pain button:

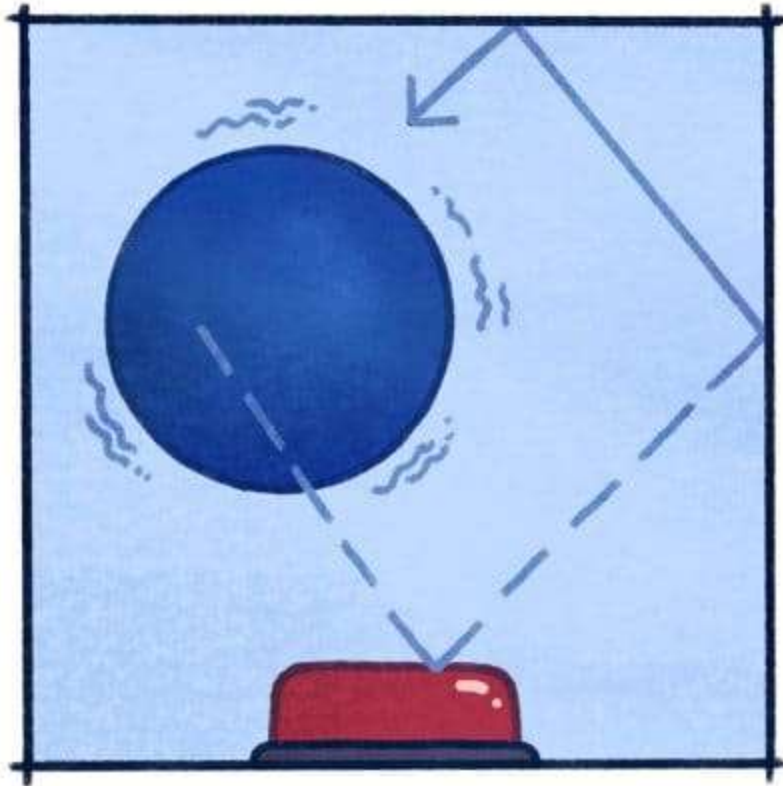


In the beginning, when the loss is so fresh and new, the grief that many people feel is overwhelming and large. It's so large, in fact, that every time you move the box — moving through your everyday life — the grief ball can't help but hit the pain button:

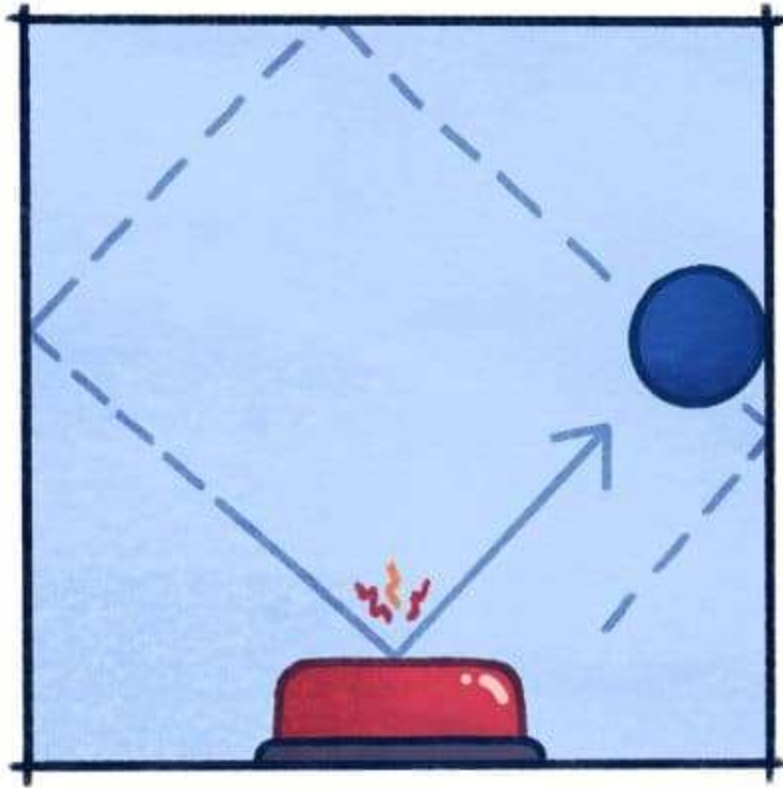


The ball rattles around the box at random, hitting the pain button every time. This is how many people initially experience loss. You can't control it and you can't stop it. The pain just keeps coming pretty regularly, no matter what you do or how much others try and comfort you. The pain a person experiences may feel unrelenting and never-ending.

Over time, however, the ball starts to shrink on its own:



You still go through life and the grief ball still rattles around inside the box. But because the ball has gotten smaller, it hits the pain button a little less often. You almost feel like you can go through most days without even having the pain button hit. But when it does hit, it can be completely random and unexpected. Like when you're staring at the person's name in your friend's list, or come across their favorite video or TV show. The pain button still delivers the same amount of pain no matter how large or small the ball is.



As time passes, the ball continues to shrink and with it, our grief for the loss experienced.

Most people never forget the loss they experienced. But over time, the ball becomes so small that it rarely hits the pain button. When it does, it is still as painful and hard to understand as it was the very first time we felt it. But the frequency of the hits has decreased significantly. This gives a person more time in-between each hit, time used to recover and feel “normal” again.

Time also allows our hearts to heal and to begin to remember the person as they were in life.

Grief is never experienced the same way for any two people. But it helps to know that grief impacts most of us in a way where the pain is intense at the beginning, but the frequency (if not the intensity) of the pain lessens over time. Most of us walk through life, carrying our own box with a ball of grief inside of it. Remember that the next time you see someone, as they may be struggling with their own ball in the box.

