

Moving Forward

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When I've worked with those who are grieving, there seems to be a desire to call it "moving forward" rather than "moving on". As one client recently explained to me, "Moving on feels like I'm trying to get away from something; and moving forward feels like I'll take the memory with me and grow from it."

Many of us are familiar with the Elizabeth Kubler-Ross Grief Cycle to include denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. David Kessler, author of several books on grief and loss, writes about a sixth stage of grief. Kessler calls his sixth stage of grief and loss meaning. In a recent article by Elizabeth Bernstein of the *Wall Street Journal*, Kessler shares that "everyone has lost something this year." Be it Sunday dinner at grandma's, a holiday celebration, church, graduations, weddings or funerals - it all seemed to vanish into thin air due to the pandemic. Our sense of community, things that hold us together, just disappeared.

These and other things are significant losses and we are still adjusting, coping, and rebuilding our physical and psychological energy to move beyond, to move forward. But how? Kessler suggests we look closely at our grief and not dismiss it or rush past it. He writes that meaning is the sixth stage of grief, and that meaning is "what we create afterward." His hope is that, even though it takes time and is a very personal journey for each of us, we give ourselves and each other the time and respect needed to create meaning of what has happened.

In finding our own meaning, we can often help others who are also grieving and searching for their own meaning. Being present, listening, and not needing to respond can show deep respect for another's process toward their own meaning. We can do this for our loved ones, including our children. He asks us to simply show up and be there, authentically, with ourselves and each other.

Kessler writes:

Showing up means not avoiding, not pushing it away, not trying to bright-side it or find the silver linings. It goes back to taking the time to sit with it ... We have this expectation that you finish with grief at some point. You never finish with it. But that does not always mean pain. If we show up for our grief, in time we will grieve with more love than pain.