

Grief, Crazy Feelings and the Single Parent

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The grief cycle will make you think you are going crazy as a single parent.

One minute you are fine, and the next, you are so mad at your ex, you could spit.

One minute you feel great about the new beginnings in your life, and the next, you can feel the depression coming on.

As a single parent and in a stepfamily, sometimes my feelings and reactions felt out of control. I really did feel pretty good about how I was doing, and then some small trigger would come out of nowhere, and I would just feel- yes- flooded with feeling.

It wasn't until my husband and I were teaching a course for single parents that I had an "ah hah" moment. The program talked about the fact that the grief cycle wasn't linear. It was cyclical. You didn't just go from Denial, to Anger to Bargaining to Depression to Acceptance to Hope. You might go through each of the stages but then you would swing back to the one that was giving you the most problem.

You know those people who are still mad umpteen years after their divorce? They probably got stuck in "anger". Or the one who can't seem to move forward, they may be in "depression". Ideally though, as we move back to the feelings that give us the problem, we learn how to get through it. The swing from Acceptance back to something else gets shorter until our grief for the most part has been worked through.

How long does it take? It is different for everyone, but the most important thing is to **be conscious of what is really going on with your feelings and understand that those feelings will pass.**

I found that **regular exercise** was a great deterrent to having out of control feelings. When my body was tired, my emotions were tired.

**Developing your faith** is another part of single parenting, and one we will discuss in the next few weeks. Single parents need to know that there are many good things that will happen to them but they need to have the faith to hang on.

And my personal favorite for dealing with my crazy episodes. Talking to myself. **Learning to talk to yourself in a positive manner works.**

My stepfather loved to tell the story of the woman he saw in the grocery store with a screaming child in her cart. The woman was saying, "You'll be fine. It's okay. It will be over soon". She just kept repeating these three sentences over and over again quietly to herself. My stepfather came up to her and told her how impressive it was that she kept her cool with her child. And she replied, "Oh, I wasn't talking to her, I was talking to myself".

Come up with two or three phrases that you can say to yourself when you recognize a reaction or one of those crazy grief cycles happening to you. Remind yourself how great you are, how strong you are, and that you will get through this time to a better one.

Yes, you are, and yes, you will.