

Yoga for Grief~ A Transformative Journey Towards Healing

"To be human is to know loss in its many forms. These seasons in our lives are intense and require a prolonged time to honor what the soul needs to fully digest the grief. We are told to "get on with it" and "get over it". The lack of compassion surrounding grief reflects an underlying fear and mistrust of this basic human experience. We must restore the healing ground of grief. We must find the courage, once again to walk its wild edge." ~Francis Weller (The Wild Edge of Sorrow)

As I age, I am understanding more deeply the impermanent nature of all things...the death of loved ones, failing health, and challenging life transitions. Knowing this does not ease the experience of loss or grief. Between 2016 and 2017, my mother passed after suffering a debilitating illness and stroke. Barely a year later, my younger brother died suddenly. My apprenticeship with sorrow has taught me that grief is our natural and organic response to loss, and we will all experience it at some point in our life. Although everyone grieves, not everyone mourns. We don't always allow for the outward expression of grief. In our culture, we often feel rushed to get over our losses, and we may even feel impatience with ourselves, wondering why we can "move on". Sometimes the grief we finally do allow ourselves to feel, is from sorrows and losses that happened earlier in our lives. Grief that was not acknowledged or was associated with shame, such examples could be the breakdown of one's nuclear family, the loss of a job or relationship; the death of a same sex partner, the loss of a family pet.

Ray Reginald, author of Touching Enlightenment writes: "So much is carried in our bodies. The Wisdom that is held within our tissues is something that we have almost completely forgotten. And yet there is no awareness more situated in the present moment than what is found in our bodies. With our body, we are in the presence of a force and intelligence that is filled with wisdom, that is loving, flawlessly reliable and strange to say worthy of our deepest devotion. When we begin to inhabit the body as our primary way of sensing, feeling, and knowing the world, when our thought operates as no more than a handmaiden of that somatic way of being, we find that we as human beings we are in a state of intimate relationship and connection with all that is."

Grief and Yoga have led me to this wisdom within my body. During the time that I felt most raw, I stopped attending yoga classes. I allowed my practice to meet and support me where I was. As I listened within, I instinctively slowed everything down. My movement became meditative and mindful; deep breathing and restorative poses took me inward to a place of "holy peace", and rest. I am trusting that my body does know how to heal, when I provide it with what it needs. A body that can relax, can heal.

Yoga is not meant to take away grief. It is a support that activates our inner resources so that we can tend to our body and mind when we feel broken and dismembered. A gentle and restorative practice, encourages us to be active participants in our healing. Yoga helps us to feel

grounded when our world is shaken, helps us to release held tension and emotion in our body; breathing practices take us out of our thinking mind and activate our life force within. Healing grief requires time and attention to our hearts. Yoga is a process, and a practice. We show up for ourselves with compassion and curiosity, tending to each moment, each sensation and each emotion as it arises. Yoga eases and can provide a lifelong foundation for centering and relief during difficult times.

A recent participant shares: *" I thought my journey with grief started with the passing of my daughter. I know now that grief has many faces and many time periods. Taking this class has opened me up to this realization. Gentle restorative yoga poses, and using my breath, have helped me release the barriers of grief. I've felt a gentle lift from the pain that I've held in my body. I am grateful to have taken this class. Lynne has a gentle and calming effect and teaches from her heart and soul. Many thanks." B.C.~Saskatoon*

Lynne Harley is retired from her profession in Social Services and Life Skills Coaching. Over the years much of her work involved creating and facilitating empowerment programs for adults. She is a 200 RYT Certified Yoga Teacher, registered with Yoga Alliance International. In August of 2018, Lynne completed 85 hours of Restorative Yoga training at Semperviva Yoga Studio in Vancouver, B.C. and is now certified as a Therapeutic Restorative Yoga Teacher. Lynne has trained in sound healing and also facilitates a Chakra Gong Restorative Yoga Program; and Gong Immersion Meditations. See upcoming program dates in the calendar of events in this Wholife. For more information, and to offer any programs within in your community, visit www.lynneharley.com or contact Lynne at 306-270-3800.