



# **Beliefs That Are Keeping You Stuck**



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- So many beliefs that we have learned as a child are not helpful. Our parents did the best they could with what they learned or didn't learn themselves around how to respond to grief.
- If we are parents we may have fallen into the same habits we learned because we didn't know any better until now. It is time to learn new habits and beliefs about grief.

# Did You Learn To Stuff Your Emotions?

- Have you ever had anyone tell you as a child ....“don’t cry”, “don’t feel bad” or “what is wrong” when you were sad, crying or upset?
- When we respond to emotions with comments such as this we are essentially saying that you shouldn’t feel the way you are feeling.
- If we heard comments like this as a child we learned to stuff our authentic emotions. We learned there was something wrong with how we were feeling. We learned that we shouldn’t feel bad.





# Were You Given The Message That You Should Just Replace The Loss?

- Did you ever lose a pet as a child and have someone say “don’t feel bad, you can always get another one” ... dog, cat, hamster etc.
- When my husband died I had many people say “You’re still young, you’ll find someone else”.
- These comments are all well-intended but it diminishes the heartbreak and teaches us to stuff our feelings.
- If you are a parent it’s likely that you are passing these unhelpful beliefs to your children just like I did before I learned new beliefs.



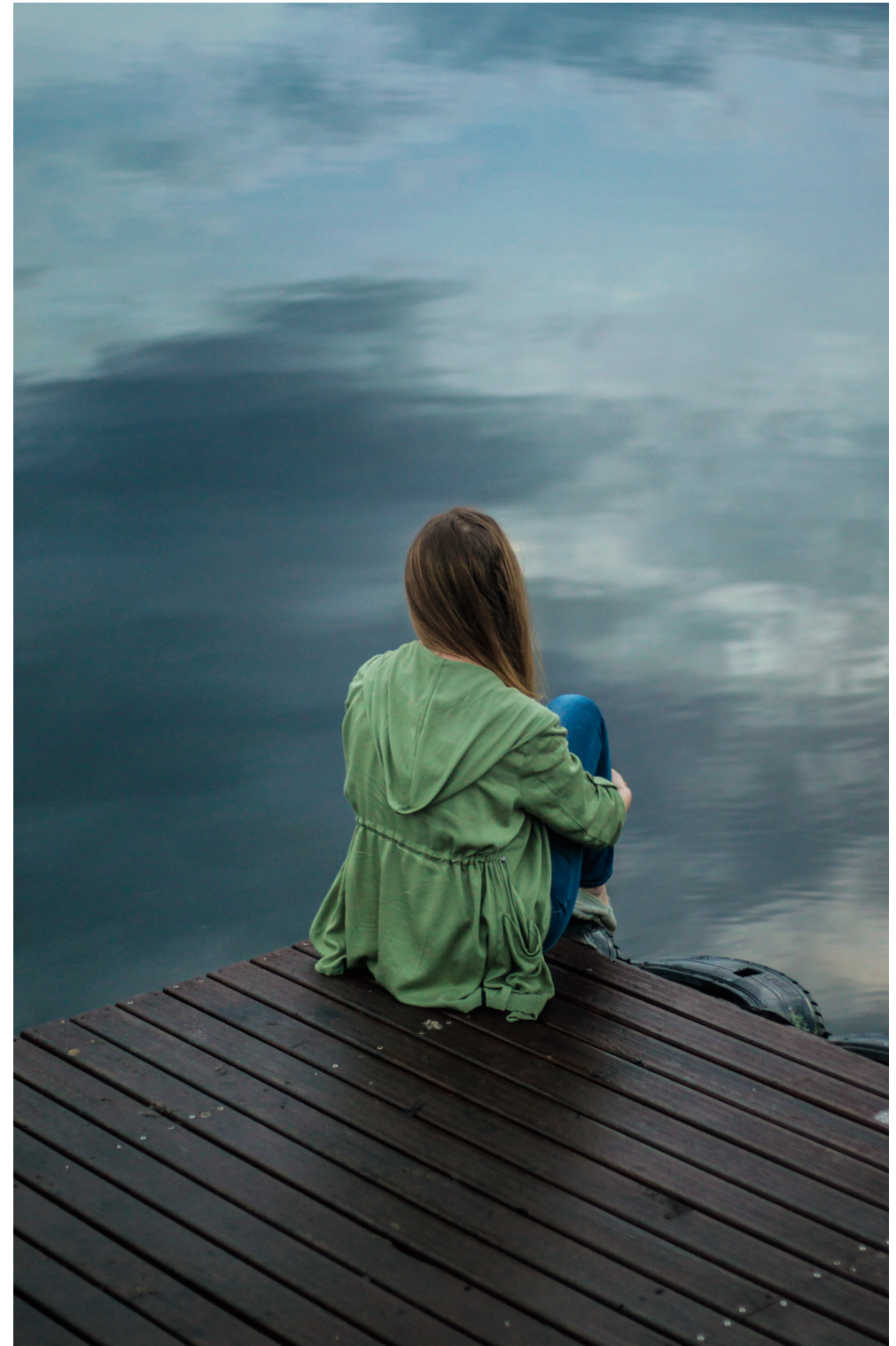
# Learning To Isolate

When you were crying as a child were you ever told “if you’re going to cry... go to your room”?

Have you ever heard the saying...“Laugh and the whole world laughs with you, cry and you cry alone”?

“Give her some space” or “She needs to be alone”

At the time when you need emotional understanding, you are taught to be by yourself. These beliefs, comments and saying have taught us to grieve alone and to isolate.



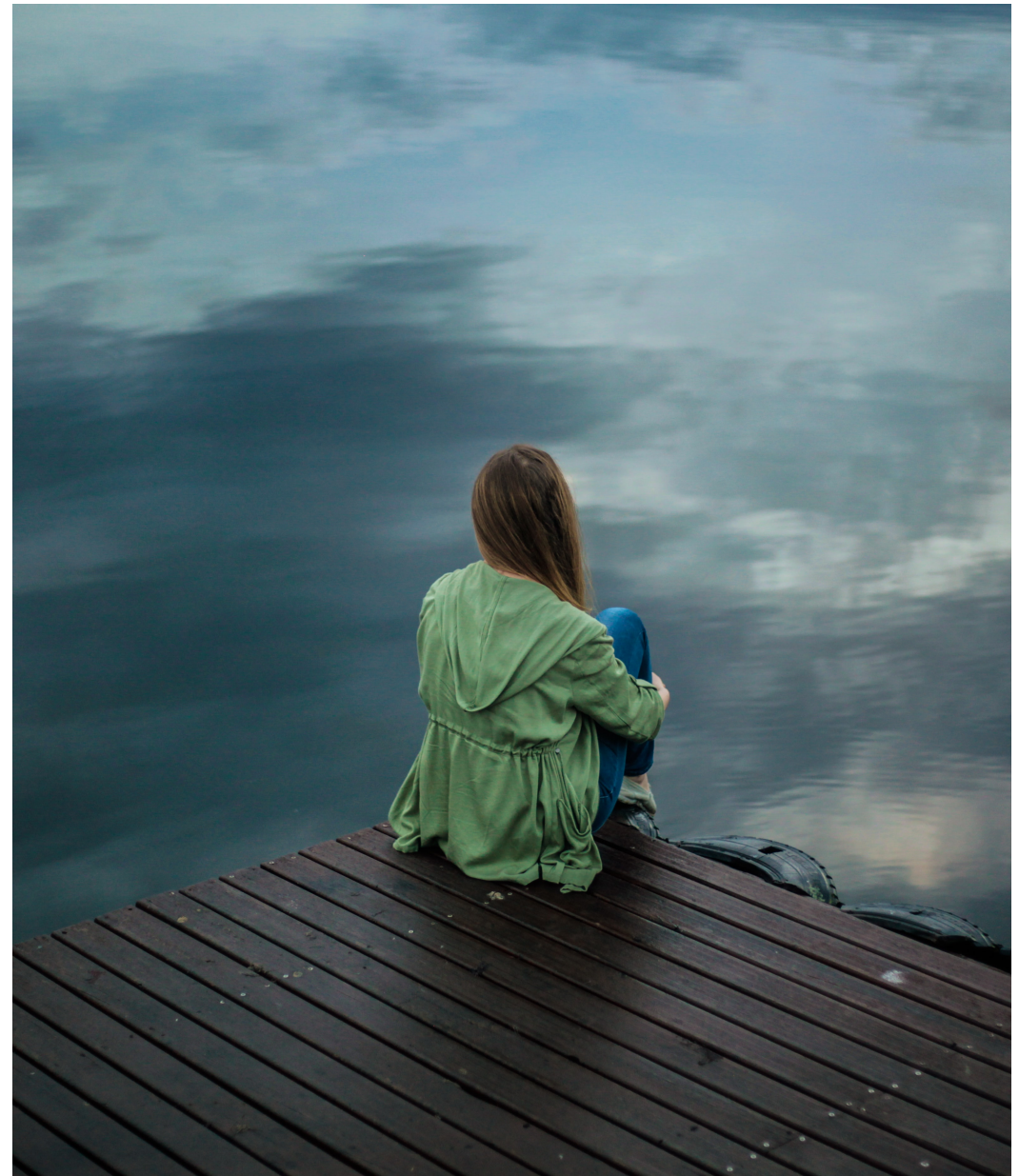
# **In General Our Society Is Uncomfortable With Painful Emotions**

- Essentially our society teaches us that being sad, or having negative feelings is not ok and in general our society is uncomfortable with painful emotions.
- We are left feeling sad and dismissed
- As a result, we shut down our normal and natural feelings.



# Just Give It Time

- When you felt sad did you ever have anyone say to you “just give it time”?
- While the intensity will reduce over time, time alone does not magically heal our grief.
- It matters what you do within the time.
- I have had many clients that continued to suffer for many years... even decades with the pain of their grief until they learned effective tools for Growing From Grief.







# You've Got To Be Strong For Others

- Have you ever been told that you have to “be strong for your kids”, parents, etc.?
- Again, this teaches us that we need to stuff our authentic emotions and cover them up to be strong for others.
- This can be confusing for our children if we are parents because they learn from what they observe. If you've had a loss and they don't see you expressing normal and natural emotions then they will learn that it isn't ok for them either.

# Just Keep Yourself Busy

“Just keep yourself busy” or “stay active”. These are all messages that we should bury our authentic emotions instead of feeling them.

No matter how busy you keep yourself the pain will still be in your heart.

Busyness is just a distraction  
Stuffing all of these emotions as a result of all of these beliefs is exhausting!







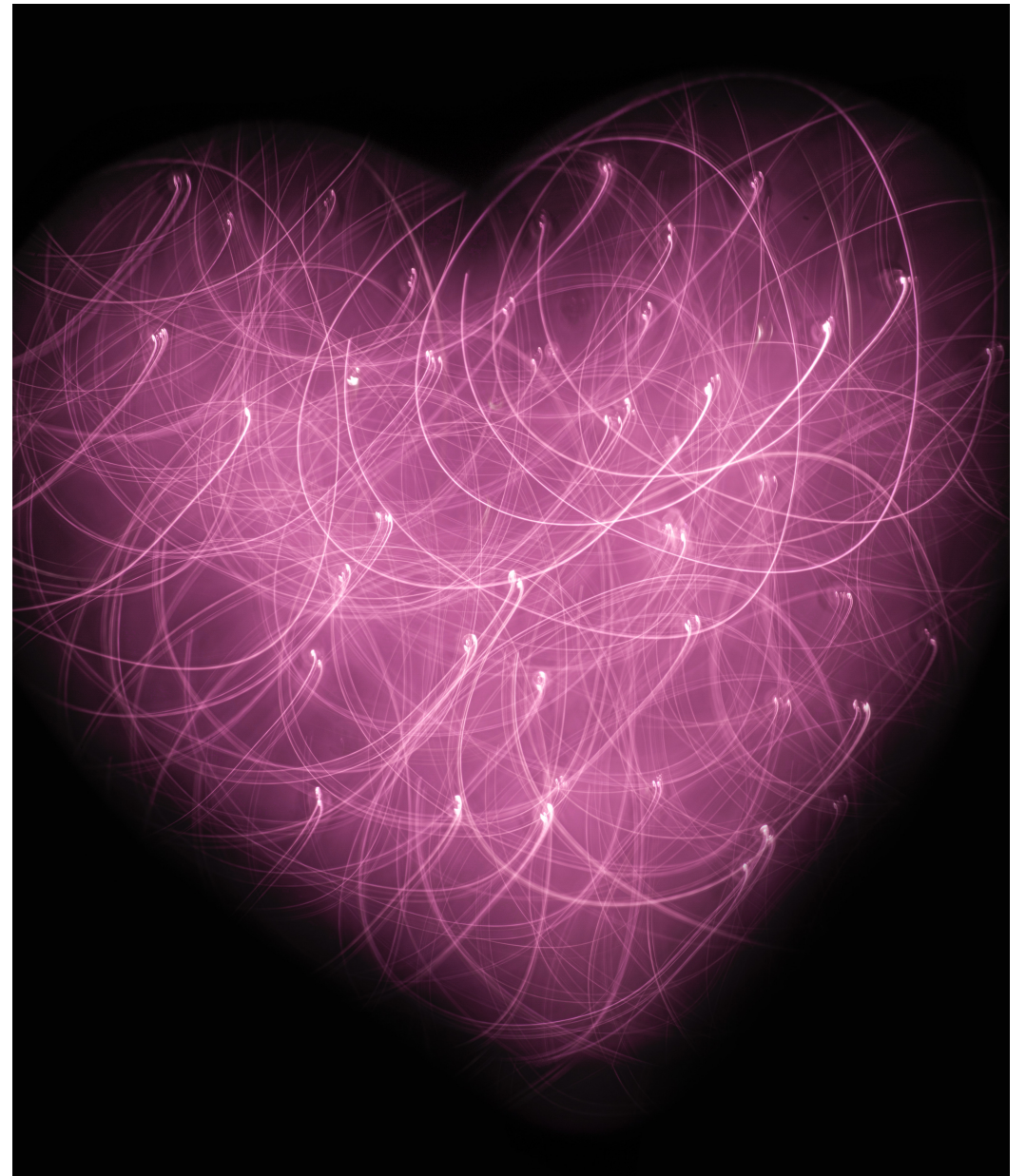
# Heads Instead Of Hearts

- Grief is heartbreaking. Trying to heal a broken heart with our head doesn't work.
- Almost all intellectual responses to grief begin with "Don't feel bad..."
- Intellectual responses diminish normal and natural emotions and heartbreak.
- Feeling emotionally misunderstood can lead to emotional isolation.



# Our Cultural Default


- Culturally we are so used to responding to matters of the heart with the head. This is likely how your parents responded to your heartbreak as a child and if you are a parent this is naturally how you may respond to your own children when they have a broken heart.
- We rely on our intellect at the expense of our feelings.
- As a society, we are way more familiar with using our heads instead of our hearts.





# For example...

- “Don’t feel bad... you’ll meet someone new (after losing a romantic relationship from death or divorce)”
- “Don’t feel bad... you’ll do better next time”
- “What’s done is done”
- “You have to move on”
- “Don’t burden others with your feelings”
- “Be thankful you have another son”
- “The living must go on”
- “He’s in a better place”
- “All things must pass”
- “He led a good life”
- “You’ll find someone else”
- “God will never give you more than you can handle”
- “Be grateful you were together as long as you were”



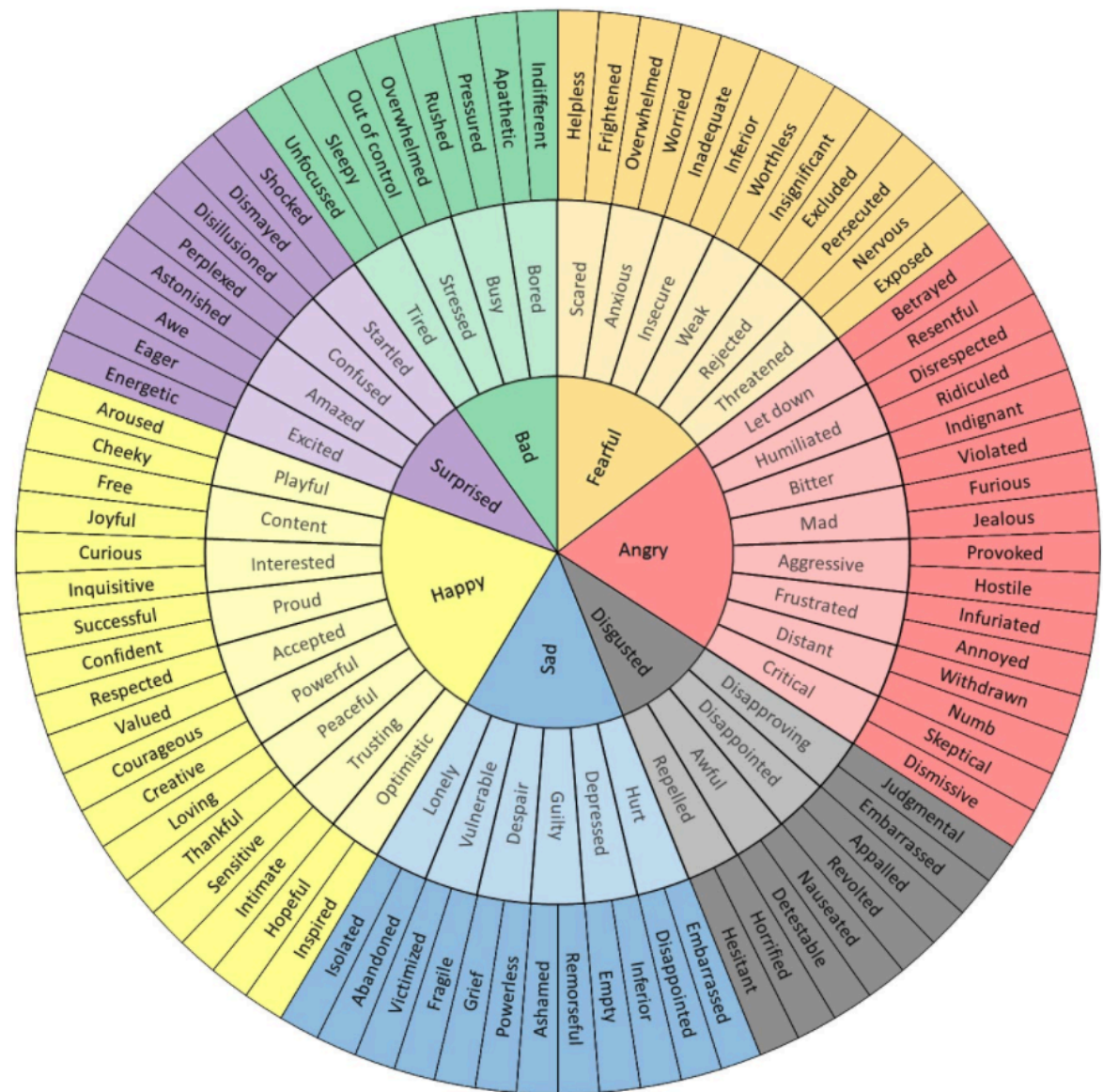
Don't feel the way you feel because sad,  
painful or negative feelings aren't good.

Instead, you **SHOULD** be positive and only  
feel positive emotions.



# Validating emotions

- Instead, it would be helpful to practice validating the heartfelt emotions. Using this feeling wheel can be helpful in identifying the emotion.
- For example, “Wow, sounds like you are feeling really lonely and overwhelmed”
- Feelings don’t need to be fixed. They need to be heard and acknowledged.





# Avoiding talking about “death”


- We are so uncomfortable with death often we even avoid using the word “death”.
- For example “He passed away”, “Dad is gone”, “I lost my husband”.
- This can be especially confusing for children.
- It’s better to avoid using metaphors with children. Instead, tell the truth. “Your Dad has died”.



# Loss Of Trust

- When our feelings are consistently dismissed as a child we lose our ability to trust others with our vulnerable feelings and can become guarded in showing our authentic emotions.





# Awareness Is The First Step


- The challenge can be that these beliefs that we have learned as a child can be so ingrained in us that it can be hard to see how they are limiting us.



# **People Don't Know What To Say And They Don't Know How You Feel**

- Often those around us mean well however they simply don't know what to say.
- For example, "I know how you feel".
- The truth is that no one can really know how you feel. They may have had a similar loss (such as their husband dying) but everyone has their own experience and relationship with the person they have lost.





# Changing The Subject

- Or they may try to change the subject or say things that they think will make you feel better.
- For example, “Don’t feel bad, he’s in a better place now”.
- Again, these kinds of comments can be well-intended but they diminish the fact that you are still heartbroken.



# False Labels

- Grief is a normal and natural response to loss.
- It's not a condition or a personality disorder.
- In my opinion, all too often the grief can be mislabeled as PTSD, stress, ADD, and depression.





# Grief Is Not A Medical Problem.

- Depression does have similar symptoms of grief. We have less motivation, less energy. But these feelings are normal and natural after a loss.
- In my opinion, often we are looking for medical solutions to non-medical normal and natural feelings.
- Covering up the normal and natural feelings of grief with medication buries the feelings making them difficult to feel fully at a later date.



# Grief Is Supposed To Be Painful

- This is in line with how we have learned as a society to cover up negative emotions. For example “Don’t feel bad. Here have some milk and cookies to feel better”.
- Grief is painful. It is supposed to be and it’s ok.