

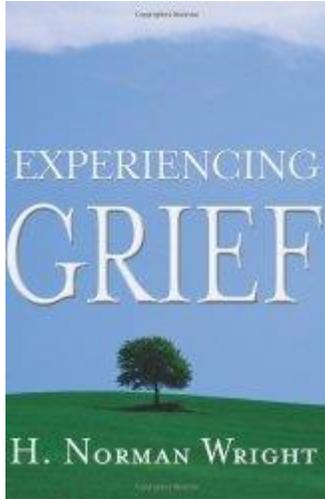
Grief Brain: Grief Affects Memory and Thinking

Hope in the Storm, A Mother's Journey Through the Storm of Grief On a Quest For Understanding, Healing and Hope

<http://tuckerscott.blogspot.com/2015/02/grief-brain-greif-affects-memory-and.html>

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Since my son's death I have experienced these same symptoms [symptoms common with chemo therapy], which has me asking, "Is there such a thing as Grief Brain?"



Grief affects long and short term memory, as well as cognitive function. Complicated grief can have severe and lasting effects on both. While grieving, you may feel absent minded or forgetful. Where once you were a master at taking a phone call, microwaving dinner and changing the baby all at the same time, now multi-tasking can quickly become overwhelming. You may find yourself easily distracted or have difficulty focusing or staying on task. No, you are not going crazy, you are not losing your mind, and you're not turning into a flaky person. Absentmindedness and mental fog often accompany bereavement. For most people memory and thinking improve as they work through their grief.

I think this quote from H. Norman Wright's book *Experiencing Grief* explains this phenomenon well. "Grief disrupts your mind and thinking abilities. Confusion moves in and memory takes a vacation...Just as your leg can experience a cramp and not move, it's as though your mind has a memory cramp. Your mind is paralyzed and shuts down."

So is that it? Are we doomed to simply tying strings on our fingers to remind us of what we are forgetting to do or say? How can a person recover from grief brain and what are some tricks to make things a little easier?

I have always been a list maker and more so now that I am experiencing grief. I have a tablet that sits on my desk and nearly every day I visit it, rewrite it and sometimes I take things off that should never have made the list in the first place. I use a black sharpie to line out completed task. I love the bold black line of accomplishment. It reassures me that I am still on track and no matter how long it takes to accomplish some of these tasks, I am doing so, and that is what counts most.

I have also adopted the practice of setting reminders. The minute I think of something I have to do, I have to grab my iPhone and ask Siri to remind me or I will forget. I have discovered that this needs to be done immediately. I don't know how many times I have thought to set a reminder and then stared at my phone while Siri repeats. "What can I help you with?" Ugh. The most frustrating part is that it was just less than 10 minutes ago that I thought of the something and now it escapes me just a quickly.

I have set bills up on auto pay so that I do not have to stress out about the power getting turned off because I forgot to pay it or my credit score plummeting because I am late on credit card payments. I made a conscious choice to simplify my life as much as possible. I've been saying "no" more often to people's demands or requests for favors and my time. I have tried to kick as many things off my plate as possible. All that running around, appointments, tasks and chores lead me to feel out of control and spread too thin. Now I only do what I must and what I am passionate about.

Physically speaking (and I am no doctor) eating right, exercise and adequate sleep can all affect cognitive function and memory. While grieving your mind and body are both hard at work. Do not neglect your health physically. For most grievers cognitive function will return and for others, especially those that experience complicated grief, the fogginess

sticks around for good. Learning how to compensate for this setback can help prevent it from causing other problems in your personal life, work and relationships.



In Loving Memory Of Tucker Scott Arnold

Brave: "To never give up and to know that you don't have a limit to how hard you can try."
Tucker S Arnold, 2011

Tucker bravely fought against Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. He did not give up, his body did.