

Finding Your Way Through Hard Times

With Oren Jay Sofer

Last week, I stepped outside our apartment, looked up at the sky, and took a deep breath of fresh air for the first time in over a week. It was a blessed change from the wildfire smoke that had been covering much of the West coast.

As if 2020 couldn't get any worse, 3 million acres of forest have burned on the West coast. Hurricane Sally pummeled Alabama. And last Friday, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg passed away—a huge blow to the sense of balance on the US Supreme Court.

Amidst all of this, my partner and I were talking about how heavy our hearts have been, how deeply disturbed and out of sorts we have felt. Something settled inside for both of us when she said, “We’re grieving.”

We’ve each lost something this year: a loved one, our own health, a job, social connection with friends, a way of life, the sense of “normalcy” in our days (for better or worse).

This recognition has helped me contextualize the range of emotions that continue to flow through me. If you find yourself out of sorts, I invite you to reflect: what have you lost this year? Are you, too, grieving?

Can you give yourself complete permission to be exactly where you are? It’s okay to feel morose, angry, unmotivated, heavy, or stuck. It’s okay to feel hopeless or lost. And yes, it’s okay to feel joyful, happy or light-hearted—that brightness renews the spirit.

When we can meet grief with understanding, patience and tenderness, when we create enough space to mourn our losses, the heart can get about its own work of healing. Mourning is the heart’s way of metabolizing loss. It’s a natural process that helps us make sense of change and orient to a new reality.

For grief is the aching of the heart when we are separated from that which we love. It’s a longing for what we love in its absence. Just as shadows are cast by light, grief is cast by love.

However you’re doing, I send these words with the hope that they offer some companionship in the face of loss, and some encouragement to honor your longing for that which you love.