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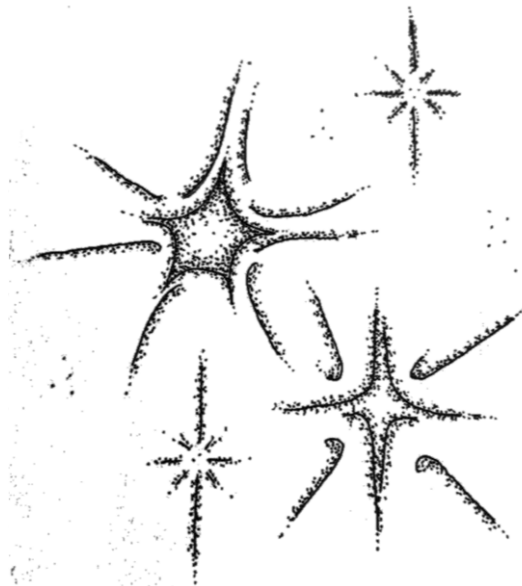
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# The Grief Garden Path



I dedicate this book to  
Richard and Rob



# Foreword

By Linda Magistris, CEO/Founder,  
The Good Grief Trust



Julie has written this insightful and heartfelt book from a powerful place. A place that has a true depth of understanding, derived from her lived experience and empathy for those who are affected by the death of someone they love. She offers hope, guidance and a unique way of encouraging us to think about our 'garden', our life, that she

believes needs tending with care and regular watering. It is a simple, effective analogy, which helps illustrate the importance of self-care when going through a life-changing ordeal, such as a bereavement. We often lose sight of ourselves when

we are grieving, so it is vital we find a way to nurture our souls.

Grief impacts your physical, emotional and mental wellbeing. Grief is exhausting and debilitating. It is vital that we ensure our 'garden' can eventually thrive again, and that we are able to move forward through the nettles and enjoy the sunshine when it slowly emerges, albeit through dark clouds at first. With all the stories and little nuggets of advice from others who have been through the trauma of losing someone close, I believe this book will offer acknowledgement, comfort and a way forward for the bereaved, knowing they are not alone in their grief.

This beautiful quote from the book left me with a lovely, warm glow:

'Before long, each of their souls took one last flight, soaring high into the clear night sky, where the stars twinkled and shone brightly. Finally, both Peggy and Cybil were free of the bodies that no longer served them.'



Thank you to Julie for your support for our work at  
The Good Grief Trust.

We wish you all the success in the world x

#StrongerTogether



<https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org>





# Introduction

In my first book, I introduced the analogy of life being like a garden. Just like the plants in a garden, we all NEED to be nourished in order to survive and thrive. It is therefore vital to 'Keep watering YOU' - a phrase I use to remind people of the need to look after themselves, in order to be healthy and happy.

If you ask a child, 'What happens if a flower doesn't get water?', they will immediately be able to tell you that the flower will die. As humans, we are just the same - we have very basic needs, and if they aren't met, we wither and fade. We can't function, and we certainly can't reach our full potential or live our best lives. And eventually, if we don't look after ourselves, we will die.

As humans, our needs are of course more complex - we need to look after both our physical health and mental wellbeing in order to be healthy and happy. All of this is included in my message to 'Keep watering YOU', and it will forever remain the key



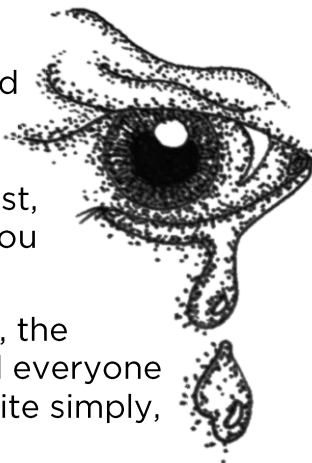


message I teach to others and practise myself. Whatever the weather in your 'garden' (your life), it will help you to survive and eventually thrive again.

Because you are reading this book, it is likely that you have entered the difficult and challenging process of grief, which I call the 'grief garden path'. Chapter 1 will tell you some more about this process – simply understanding where you are and what you are going through will help you in at least some small way on your road to recovery.

When someone you love dies, you can feel as if you have crash-landed on a different planet. It's not a trip you have planned or paid for, you don't even know how long it will last, and it's certainly not somewhere you would recommend to a friend.

If someone you love dies suddenly, the devastation causes everything and everyone around you to change for ever. Quite simply, nothing remains the same.



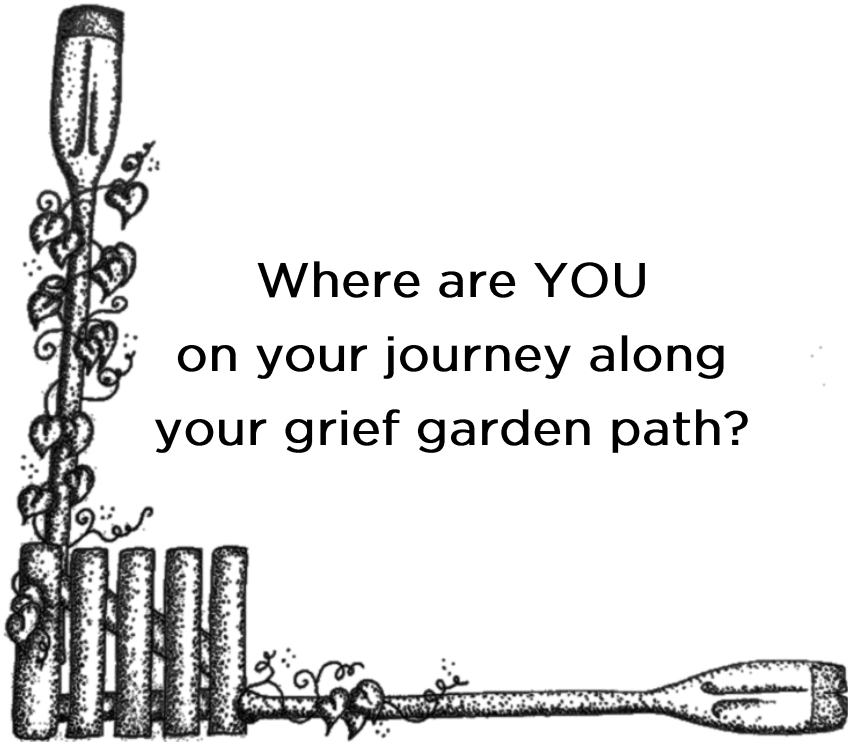
Grief happens to everyone who loses someone or something they truly love. It doesn't have to be a person – it could be a way of life, a relationship, a treasured possession, a pet, or something else.

In this book I am particularly looking at the grief at the loss of a loved one. It is my hope that you find something that resonates with you and helps you with what you are experiencing. Maybe it will be a few words, or even a picture, that will give you a greater understanding of your grief garden path, helping you in some way to feel more positive.

The following chapter gives insight into the grieving process. In Chapter 2 you will find a fictional story, which I hope will paint a picture of what you may be feeling or have experienced. After that, I trust that you find some inspiration and reassurance from the real-life stories of people who have suffered different forms of grief, and from their 'golden nuggets of wisdom' – their tips on how to feel better and to look after YOU.



Where are YOU  
on your journey along  
your grief garden path?





# Chapter 1

**The GOOD grief garden path**



The human experience of grief has been studied and written about throughout the ages. In this chapter I will look at two different understandings of the grief process, by Dr Kübler-Ross, from 1969, and by Richard A Dershimmer, from 1990. I'll tell you a bit about my own experience of grief, then talk about my analogy, the 'grief garden path', which is a simplified way for you to understand your own grieving process.

**While you are reading this chapter, I would like you to consider the following question.**

**Where are YOU on your journey along the 'good grief garden path'?**

Having become a nurse at the age of 17, I was quite young when I first became aware of the stages of grief. During my training, I learned about the work of Dr Elizabeth Kübler-Ross. Her memoirs are incredible, and I remember her talking about her pioneering work in teaching medical students about death and dying. She would even take dying patients into her lectures, for them to share their thoughts and feelings with her students.



Dr Kübler-Ross was able to identify that everyone goes through a grief cycle after losing someone or something they love. This became so well known that it is likely you already have some idea of the different stages identified by Kübler-Ross, as outlined below, each with some examples of the reactions and feelings people experience.

1. **Denial** – avoidance, confusion, elation, shock, fear
2. **Anger** – frustration, irritation, anxiety
3. **Depression** – helplessness, hostility, flight, feeling overwhelmed
4. **Bargaining** – struggling to find meaning, reaching out to others, telling one's story
5. **Acceptance** – exploring options, new plan in place, moving on

Looking now at that list of points outlining the grief cycle, you might already be able to see where you are within the process of grief, according to Kübler-Ross.



My daughters and I started our journey on the grief garden path ten years before this book was published. It all began with a phone call out of the blue, a nursing sister calling to tell me she had some terrible news to share.

The worst thing was the fact that, in that split second, not only had my life changed for ever, but also the lives of my two beautiful daughters. Their father, Richard, had died very suddenly, at the age of 44. He was their dearly loved daddy or, as Amy called it, the other half of her chocolate cake. She described to me when we divorced that if you cut a chocolate cake down the middle, to create two perfect halves, that was how much she loved us both – equally.

Richard's death will probably always remain the worst day of my life. Although he and I had separated prior to his death, I appreciated the impact that his death would have on the lives of our children. Especially hard was that his death was sudden, unpredictable and untimely. Like a tornado, it hit our 'garden' – our lives – leaving nothing the same. There was devastation, everywhere we looked.

