

# when others don't recognise your loss

there is a particular ache in grieving someone the world does not expect you to grieve, a friend, a chosen-family member, a love that did not fit a form. you may find people moving on while you are still undone, or offering the kind of quick sympathy reserved for distant losses. this is called disenfranchised grief: real grief that goes unrecognised. and being unrecognised does not make it any less real.

you do not have to argue for your grief to be allowed it. but on the days it helps, these words are yours to borrow.

## WHEN PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE IT

when someone treats your loss as smaller than it is, rarely unkindly, usually just unknowingly, you are allowed to gently set them right:

“they weren’t just a friend. they were family to me, and i’m grieving them like family.”

“i know it might not look like a big loss from outside. from inside, it’s one of the biggest of my life.”

and when you have no energy to explain, “this one is hitting me very hard” is a whole and sufficient sentence.

#### HOW TO HOLD YOUR OWN GROUND

ask for what you need. people may not offer, simply because they do not realise how much this matters. it is alright to tell them, to ask a friend to sit with you, to say this was family.

mark it, even if no one expects you to. light a candle, keep something of theirs, go to the place that was yours. you do not need a ritual the world hands you; you can make your own.

find the people who do understand. a grief group, a counsellor, the mutual friends who loved them too, there are people who will not ask you to justify this. seek the rooms where your grief is taken at full weight.

let the disbelief be theirs, not yours. if someone cannot see how large this is, that is a limit in their understanding, not a measure of your love. you do not have to take it on.

let every feeling have room. grief and the strange extra weight of being unseen can sit together. you are allowed both, and you are not making it up.

IF THE DAYS FEEL UNBEARABLE

if you are struggling to carry on, please reach out. you should not have to hold this alone.

SADAG (South African Depression and Anxiety Group): 0800 567 567

Lifeline South Africa: 0861 322 322

**we honour it here as fully as any other.**

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