

3 Hard Truths When Setting Boundaries While Grieving

UNDERSTANDING HOW TO HONOR
YOUR NEEDS IN THE MIDST OF GRIEF.

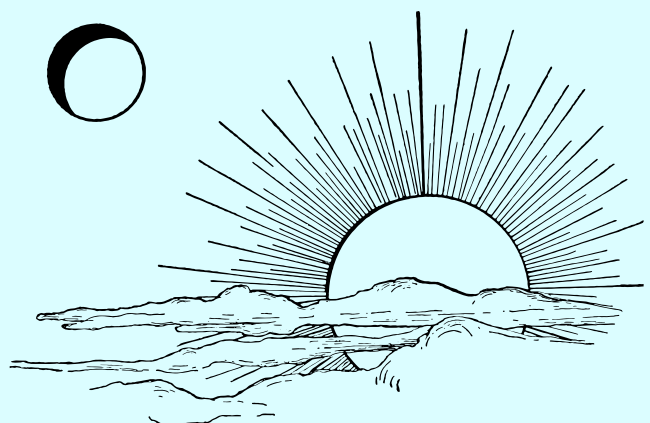


Setting boundaries is not easy. Especially when you have limited experience doing it or were raised to believe your needs did not matter.

I'm here to tell you that they do.

No one else can set boundaries for you. Part of the practice of setting boundaries and creating healthy relationships is speaking up for yourself and what you need—yes, even while you are grieving.

It's tough work. But knowing these 3 truths can help you feel better about creating a healthy space for your grief to unfold, and will help you know what to expect when doing so.



1. You Are Responsible for Communicating Your Needs.

Why can't others just intuitively know what we need? Why must we communicate our needs to them, especially while we are in deep pain?

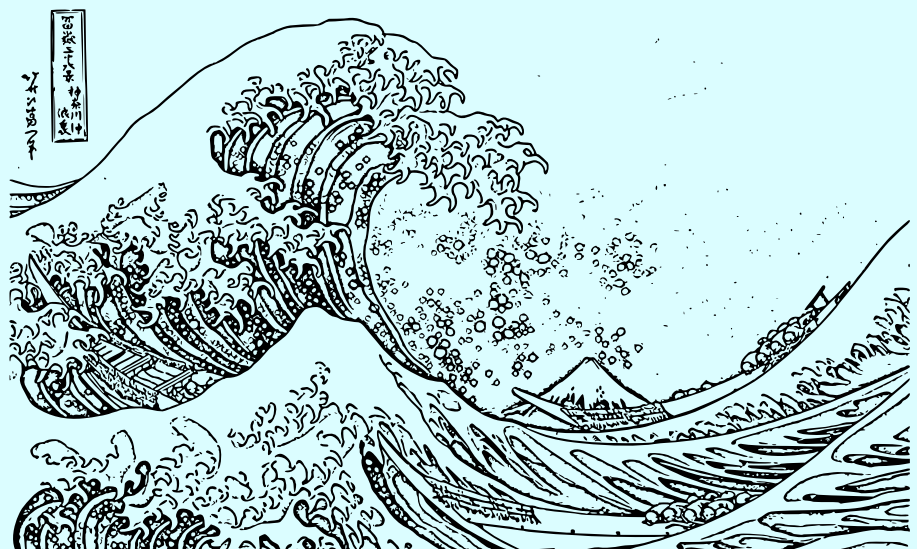
Because only YOU know what you need. So you must tell others.

Other people do not "know best," even if they have experienced grief, because they are not you.

Through the pain, numbness, and shock, it can be difficult to discern what we need most.

Your body knows what you need. Try to listen to it. Let it tell you not to answer the phone, to ask your friends to come over, to hold yourself while you cry.

Once you know what you need, you can begin communicating those needs to others so you can feel supported during this time of deep loss and pain.



2. You Will Hurt Other People's Feelings (And That's Okay—Really).

People often think they know how to help someone in grief.

I've read advice saying, "Don't wait for them to ask. Just go mow their lawn!" And we all know those people who show up with a casserole after a loss.

But the truth is that the majority of the time, we cannot anticipate the needs of other adults.

Your friends, family, and partners may be well-meaning and think they know the best way to help.

But when you have experienced a loss and want to grieve in a way that feels authentic to you and honors your loved one who has passed, you sometimes need to let people down. And that's ok. Really.

Adults are capable of being disappointed. And you are entitled to express your wants and needs.

"There is no such thing as guilt-free boundaries. Guilt is a part of the process." Nedra Glover-Tawwab, licensed therapist and boundary expert, writes in her book, *Set Boundaries, Find Peace*.

There is no way to set a boundary without feeling guilty, especially if you are a recovering codependent and people-pleaser.

"Coping with discomfort is part of the process of establishing a boundary," Glover-Tawwab writes.

This discomfort can feel impossible to manage when you are already neck-deep in grief and trying not to drown.

Repeat after me: You and your family are the ones in pain and in need of support. You do not have to allow others to step in and do what they think is best. You can set limits and communicate what is right for you.

Now more than ever, you have the right to say, "No. I do not want this," or, "*This* is what I need right now."

It may feel like stepping off a cliff at first, especially if you are new at setting boundaries.

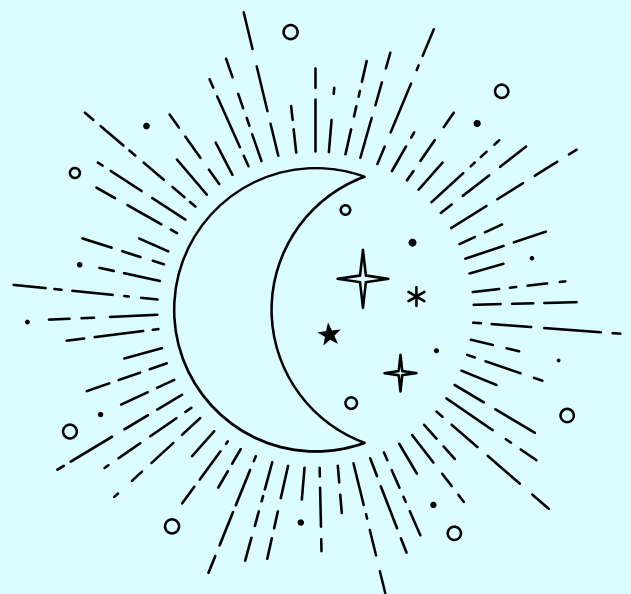
But please know that the bottom is not a scary place. In fact, it's kind of an amazing oasis down here, and it will ultimately be a place of comfort and peace during this excruciating time.

Remember, you are absolutely not (repeat: *absolutely not*) responsible for other adults' feelings, reactions, or behavior.

If they choose to take your boundary personally, this is 100% a reflection on them, not on you.

So take a deep breath and use your voice (or your words via text or email) to advocate for yourself.

It's not easy, but it is worth it to protect your needs (and those of your family) while you are coping with this loss.



3. Not Everyone Will Show Up in the Ways You Need Them to.

One of the hardest parts of grief is people not being there for you in the way you need them.

"Grief changes your friendships. For many, many people, it ends them," writes Megan Devine in her book, *It's OK That You're Not OK*.

"And even when your friends want to support you, we don't often have the skills—no matter how skilled we truly are—to witness and withstand another's pain."

The truth is that grief can change *all* your relationships.

Your relationship with yourself. Your partner.
Your parents. Your children. Your fur babies.

"Feeling helpless in the face of loss makes people do strange things," writes Devine.

The truth is that some people cannot, will not, or don't want to show up for you in the ways you need them to in your grief. And that is heartbreaking.

However, you must honor their spoken or unspoken messages and do what you need to do to be supported during this difficult time.

While we may be brave souls communicating our needs, there are beings who will be unable or unwilling to reach out, to honor what we asked for in the way we asked for it.

Pain can be triggering. When someone witnesses your discomfort, they may feel uncomfortable or afraid of what your pain may bring up in them.

Finding people to sit with you in that discomfort without trying to fix or change it can be hard.

But those people do exist. And you deserve to have them by your side to witness your pain as you grieve this profound loss.

As easy as it is to blame others, we cannot judge them for being unable to face their own pain and trauma to meet us across the abyss.

There are so many well-meaning individuals who cannot do this. We must allow them the grace to be who they are in this moment.

Let go of resentment and bitterness toward them. It's ok to acknowledge that they hurt you. It's also ok to distance yourself from them. It's even ok not to allow them back into your life, or at least not in the same way they were before.

But we must honor their needs just as we are honoring ours.

If others cannot meet us in our deep pain and loss, we must allow them not to.

We must keep looking for the support we need, keep reaching.

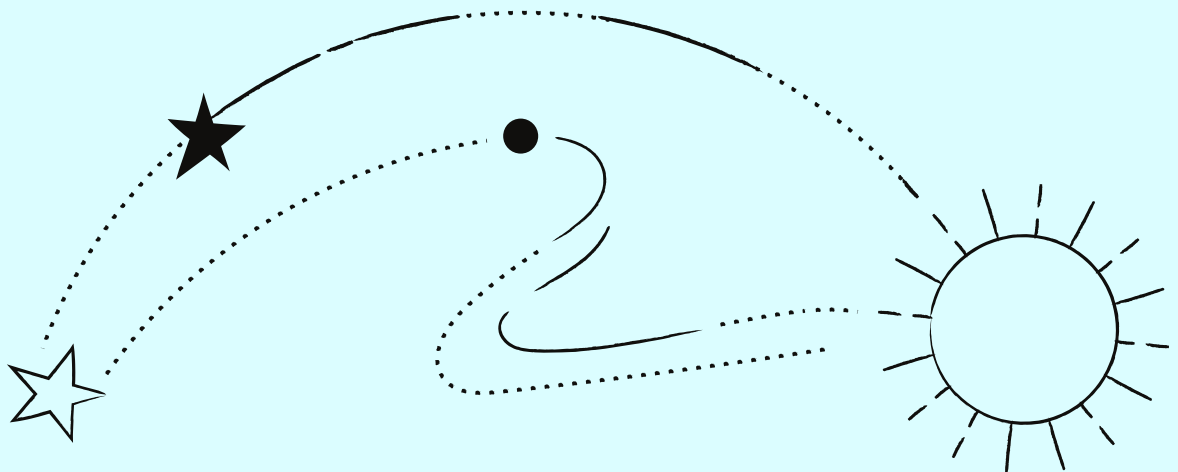
Because there are those who understand this kind of loss you have experienced.

And those are the people you want and need with you while you travel this harrowing road.

Above all, remember that you are not alone, even if the people in your life can't show up for you the way you need them to in your time of deep sorrow.

And you are absolutely not a "bad" person for speaking up for yourself and communicating your needs.

In fact, becoming aware of our needs and communicating them to others is often the only way we will have a healthy grieving process that feels authentic to us, not to mention healthy relationships in our lives.



Thank you!

Thank you for reading this guide. I hope you found it helpful.

Please let me know your thoughts or share feedback by emailing me at:
jennsahar@sagerabbitgrief.com

I am always available to speak with you for a free coaching session.

Sending tender thoughts, immense love, and soft comfort to you as you grieve.

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