

A Prescription For Grief

George Lopez

Grief is not a disorder, a disease or a sign of weakness. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual necessity, the price you pay for love. The only cure for grief is to grieve. - Earl Grollman

I have experienced a lot of death in my lifetime. My father dropped his body when I was just 30 years old. I originally moved to San Francisco to be with my best friend and his lover who both had AIDS. His lover, John died in our home 17 years ago, and Fernando, my best friend died 6 months later. As a gay man, I have lost more friends and lovers than I can count or even remember. None of these deaths affected me like the death of my sister, Michelle in June of last year.

I imagine that none of the earlier deaths affected me as deeply because I didn't know how to grieve. I was unprepared mentally, emotionally and spiritually to process the depth of loss that I was feeling with each and every person that left the planet. With each loss, I have released a little bit more of each preceding loss, whether I have been conscious of it or not. It has been a cumulative process. For my project, I have used what I have learned in this Sound Healing program to create a prescription for me to use on myself, to help with my grief process.

It was my mother, my stepfather, my partner and I who celebrated the life and released the ashes of my sister, Michelle. We began at my father's grave. I stood at his grave, holding a small cassette recorder, and sang to two songs. I had recorded the piano only tracks earlier that day. First was "A Song For Sue" which I had written for my sister, the other was "Perfect Day" by Lou Reed, one of her very favorite songs. I sang them both there, graveside for not only my sister but also for my father, as we physically released part of her ashes to the ground

around my father's grave. Then we went to the beach, where she and I had spent so many hours and released the rest of her ashes.

Music can be a tool to help us deal with feelings within us, whether we're aware of them or not. This is one of the wonderful ways music can be incredibly healing. One aspect of "healing" music is to stir our feelings, to help us deal with grief, sadness, anger or other feelings. By allowing ourselves to FEEL those feelings, the intensity will eventually lessen and even dissipate, resulting in being healing for us. The first part of the prescription for my healing was creating a loop of the song I wrote for my sister. I will use it in meditation, using the sound to bring up the feelings of grief, sadness, loss and love. I will sing the lyrics with the intention of not only feeling all that I can, for that is one key to healing, but to also release those feelings through sound, through my voice, to the universe where the energy can be recycled.

The second part of the prescription is to use chant and visualization while listening to this music I had written for Michelle. It begins by imagining a ladder descending from your brain to your heart, and stepping down each rung with each breath, until you can step into your heart center. On the next inhalation, you inhale through your heart center and imagine you're dragging all your old grief, anger and loss in with the breath. Drag all this old junk up to the crown (top) of your head, chanting out loud "sat" (rhymes with "but"). Once you reach the end of your inhale at the crown of your head, exhale through your crown and imagine all that old stuff releasing out the top of your head. As you exhale chant out loud "yam" (rhymes with "hum"), imagining the sound carrying away all your grief and emotions. Imagine huge wings opening up to the sound "yam" and taking flight with all the things no longer needed. Inhale, release, repeat. This meditation is effective because it reconnects the head and the heart, reversing traditional sounds associated with their chakras. "Sat," meaning "truth" or "true

identity," usually corresponds to the seventh chakra, while "yam" represents the sound of the fourth (or heart) chakra. By reversing these sounds, this meditation encourages consciousness in the heart and a connection between "hridaya" (gateway to the highest level of reality) and our point of union with the Divine. Head and heart become an integrated whole while releasing grief, anger and loss.

The last part of the prescription is to take the recording of "Perfect Day" to the beach, where we released the last of the ashes and to again sing with the intention of honoring and releasing. Part of the lyrics are "Oh it's such a perfect day, I'm glad I spent it with you, on such a perfect day, you just keep me hanging on". The point is to end the work on a positive or high note if you will. Grief is not just about loss, but about love. It is about the love that we feel deeply in our hearts, the love that connects each of us to each other. The deeper we feel the love, the greater the grief and the feelings of loss. There is something profound about family, where we are not only connected, but share the same DNA. When family dies, their DNA leaves the planet and a part of us is truly lost. It is imperative to honor the loss, but also recognize and celebrate the love. Love is all that lives on eternally.

I am truly grateful for this program and all that it has taught me. I have learned to look at music and sound from a completely different perspective than before. I feel blessed to put what I have learned into practice so quickly and effectively into my own life and look forward to helping others with what I have learned.