

## Dealing with Grief at Work

**Zelena Khan:** From TransPerfect and A to Z productions, this is NEXT. I'm Zelena Khan your host. Support for this podcast comes from TransPerfect, a family of companies providing language services and technology solutions for global businesses. Connect your brand to the world and visit [transperfect.com](https://transperfect.com).

Here we are with season three, with a brand-new set of guests to give you insight and information on growing and evolving businesses and industries. Hopefully, these discussions will help make you a better leader, a better employee, and all-around a better person.

In the last couple of years, there's been a common thread tethering us all together: Grief. Grief is complicated, it's ongoing, and it's hard work. When it comes to the grieving process, it can be difficult to ask for support. We reached out to Emma Payne, founder of Grief Coach, to see how we could educate our listeners on providing support to those grieving-- whether it be our friends, our family, or coworkers. Grief Coach is a subscription-based text messaging service that sends personalized support to grievers and their loved ones.

Today, Emma talks to us about her definition of grief, how she started her business and provides tips for anyone working through the grieving process. Be sure to listen through to the end of this episode for a special promotion with Grief Coach.

Please note that this episode contains subject matter that may be triggering for some audiences. If you're in need of further emotional or mental support, please seek the help of a mental health professional.

Emma, thank you so much for being here.

**Emma Payne:** Thanks for having me.

I'm really excited about this episode.

**Zelena Khan:** So today on NEXT, we have Emma Payne, the CEO of Grief Coach, which is a text-based subscription service that sends personalized support messages for those who are grieving and their peers. And Emma correct me if I'm wrong, but Grief Coach combines your passion for mobile technology and

engagement along with how you are passionate about giving confidence and enabling people with tools that they need to support each other through grief?

**Emma Payne:** Yeah, I was just going to say like, sometimes I feel like I'm living in the middle of my own Venn diagram right now. Cause I'd spent 20 something years doing mobile and digital media and about the same amount of time volunteering in things like bereavement and suicide prevention and so on. So now it's all-in-one.

**Zelena Khan:** I love it. I love it. And on top of being an entrepreneur, you're an MIT grad and you're actually known for building many online communities, right? So, I'm really interested in how we will dissect grief and just talk about how it's affected so many people, especially during these last couple of years, and how specifically we can support not only our family but think about our extended family, coworkers, through their grieving process.

So, thanks. As I mentioned, I know you have degrees from Queens College in media and communications and you also have a degree at MIT, but I kind of want to go all the way back, right? Because you started Grief Coach back in February of 2019. Can we just get into the inspiration that came from that?

**Emma Payne:** Yeah, everybody that works in bereavement has a story, of course, I'm discovering, and mine, like everybody else's, is a difficult one. So, my friend died five years ago now. He had asked me to deliver a eulogy at his funeral. I was with him when he died and it was a very difficult time of course. At the time that he asked, I said, yes, of course, whatever you want, I'd be happy to do.

But once it came time to actually fly across the country and do the eulogy, it was a scary thing, because this friend was the best friend and also second cousin of my husband who had died 10 years prior by suicide. So, in essence, what I'd agreed to do was show up, stand in front of a church, full of hundreds of people who, many of whom I hadn't heard from at all when my husband died and so 10 years is a long time.

But the funeral was a real gift from both the moment that I sat in my pew, people were saying things like, "Oh my goodness, Emma, I'm so sorry. I didn't reach out back then. I've really worried about you. I was so embarrassed that I let too much time go. How have you been? I was just scared and I didn't know what to say."

So, I had spent 10 years not hearing from all the people I would have liked to. But, a hundred people had spent that same 10 years feeling genuine shame, I would say, and sort of guilt, embarrassment about not having reached out. But the truth is they really didn't know how. They were scared, nervous. We just don't talk about grief and death anymore the way that we used to, at least in North America. So, on my plane ride home, I sort of thought, well, this is like really dumb. I'm using like web and mobile communities to do all this other stuff. We must be able to use that to also just help each other when someone dies. So yeah, Grief Coach is designed to help the griever, but it also includes grief literacy, via texts for their friends and family who want to help and don't know-how.

**Zelena Khan:** It's interesting you bring up the 10 years pass between those two deaths because it's, based on my experience with death and I've experienced a lot of deaths in my family. What I've noticed is that the most support is needed is not actually during the funeral or when the crowds are there.

It's after all of the events are over and when the person has to go back to real life, a normal life. So, you know, the fact that this kind of service is available to help you through the days is really nice. It's something I don't think enough people think about.

**Emma Payne:** Thank you. I love that part too. I love that we send texts to friends and family, and I love that a subscription lasts for a whole year.

We just had somebody in May, our first third-year renewal, which was really cool because it was one of our very first subscribers. And so, seeing someone renew for a third year and continue to see value because of exactly what you said. It's nice to have friends and family remember that this would have been your sister's birthday or that tomorrow would have been your wedding anniversary.

And when the people around you are getting those reminders or just a quick text, letting them know and giving them suggestions for what to say and do, it makes a really big difference to the experience of the griever I guess. Grief lasts a long time. It doesn't end when the funeral ends and when the flowers wilt.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah, that's definitely true.

Let's take it even further back. As a grief coach, what is your definition of grief?

**Emma Payne:** My favorite definition of grief comes from BJ Miller, who says that grief is the gap between what you have and what you wish you had.

**Zelena Khan:** Oh, not exactly coming from Webster.

**Emma Payne:** So, it's not grief isn't just about when someone dies, right?

We can grieve the loss of a relationship or a job or our health.

**Zelena Khan:** Yes.

**Emma Payne:** This time here, this is so weird to have started this company a year before COVID because we're all grieving so much. Grandparents are grieving that they have missed a year or two years with their grandchildren. So, I think that BJ's quote is right.

**Zelena Khan:** Yes.

**Emma Payne:** It's the gap between what we have and what we wish we have. And once we find a way to come to terms with what we have, then our feelings can shift.

**Zelena Khan:** That definition kind of blew my mind a little bit,

**Emma Payne:** It's pretty awesome, right?

**Zelena Khan:** I think when you think of grief, the first thought that comes to mind is death. Right.

But even if we think back on, you know, this past year with pandemics--caused divorces, and when you think about topics such as systemic racism coming up, friends, friendships have been broken up, and people have lost jobs. And so many people are grieving so many different things right now.

**Emma Payne:** I think grief is a wonderful window into all of our feelings, right? When someone is grieving, when someone has died, I think equally it's a wonderful opportunity to educate ourselves and the people around us about mental health and because we're all going to be grieving things throughout our lives. And we're all going to see our loved ones grieving too.

So yeah, I think when someone dies, it maybe is sort of as an opening to wow, this is a really awful loss. And so, it's an opportunity for me to really dig in and to understand some things about myself that I might not have understood before.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah. I'm really interested to know how business changed for you during the pandemic?

**Emma Payne:** I started working, building the Grief Coach platform a few years before that. So, I've been working on it for a long time, but we actually went live and got our first subscribers in February 2019. And that Fall, we had just launched our different packages for businesses, including a hospice program, a program so hospices in the U.S. provide 13 months of bereavement care for families, for example.

So, within months, of launching all of those programs, the whole world turned upside down. I think that our business, like many other businesses, everything just froze. I mean, for one thing, we had to add a whole new cause of death to our platform. We customize messages based on lots of things, relationship, and age, but cause of death is an important one so that someone whose dad died of cancer is getting different messages than someone whose mom died of COVID or child was stillborn or brother was in a car accident.

So, March/April we had to revamp the whole system out of new cause of death that worked with Virginia Mason's grief services team on that. By the time we came out of that, two different things were happening. One, there was definitely a media attention surge that for sure no one was wanting to interview me before COVID but once COVID came, we had this big profile with NBC news.

We've been in the New York Times or on the cover of an employee benefits magazine. So, I think grief became much more talked about during the sort of early stages of COVID than it was before. One of my expert advisors who is at Rolling Stone, she's like, this is hilarious. I mean, I've been working in bereavement for decades and all of a sudden Rolling Stone, right?

Harvard Business Review everyone was talking about it. So, in that sense, it gained profile that was long overdue; grief and loss should always be talked about that way. And I also think that on the policy front, so employers looking at their bereavement leave policies, with these numbers of people, millions of

Americans, newly bereaved, lawyers are looking at their brief that benefits. Policymakers, I do quite a lot of work with a group out of D.C. that's working to get a White House Office of Bereavement Care, for example, how are different federal agencies including their grief work. So, I think on the policy front, and the sort of media attention front, things skyrocketed more quickly than they would have otherwise.

But at the same time, the people that we were selling to were crippled. I mean, just hospice workers, healthcare workers, just struggling to keep up. So, it was like slow, fast, slow, fast. It was really weird.

**Zelena Khan:** It's like, "Oh. Business is good, but at what cost?"

**Emma Payne:** Well, I've started running non-profits for me. All the interests are aligned. Grief Coach, it's designed to be the most affordable, accessible solution there is. Most people can access and afford therapy for less than the price of one hour's therapy. You get a full year of support for you and your friends, and family. So for me, it's definitely every time a subscriber comes in, we have some sadness for their story, but also the interests are aligned, right?

If we're growing the business, it's because we're supporting exponentially more people and that feels good. So I lie awake, like when I'm going to bed at night, I think . . .

**Zelena Khan:** You're definitely part of the solution.

**Emma Payne:** I try not to think, oh my gosh, this many people died because they do die. That happens anyway.

Instead, I try to think this many people are getting support in a way that they wouldn't have before.

**Zelena Khan:** I love that. Yes. I do love that. Do you think the fact that so many people were working from home also impacted your business or just the way people were handling grief? Cause I think that's like an interesting part as well.

**Emma Payne:** Yeah. So, our clients in a non-pandemic world would be offering things like in-person support groups. So all of those were canceled. We have our client experience camps that run summer camps for grieving adolescents.

All the camps were canceled so they could offer text-based support in lieu of the in-person supports that they would normally have been offering.

I think though that the real sadness and struggle of COVID is, has been, that people are at home alone and not having funerals, hugging each other, dropping by, to go for a walk. I think that isolation and being on screen has been very difficult, true grievers. Aside from the fact that we've had more death, we've also had a lot of unsupported, lonely grief experiences.

And so I think that has been very difficult to watch. I mean, people having no funeral, not even seeing their loved one at the end.

**Zelena Khan:** That's, yes.

**Emma Payne:** And then just being left in this void, right? It's the opposite of what we as human beings need.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah. It's one thing to lose the person, but you can't even say goodbye to the person and you can't pay your respects, how you would want to.

**Emma Payne:** We have text messages going out this week to people who lost anyone in the last 15 months.

So everyone's trying to return to normal, but you're realizing your life will never return to normal. Something for you is fundamentally changed. Or now, you are going to go out into the world and you're going to see people you haven't seen since your husband died or your child died, right? So trying to build that muscle of re-entry when you've been really isolated with your patience, it's going to be really crucial.

It's hard right now for a lot of people.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah. I was definitely going to ask, you know, grieving and then having this extended period where you're not facing people and like, think about losing a partner and being invited to a birthday or to a wedding or to a social function. It's like, do I go, I don't want to go alone like, things like that.

**Emma Payne:** I think there's a lot of that right now. And so we have our texts going to grievers to help them with that experience, but then we're also

texting their friends and family colleagues, right? We have a tech series that's for if your colleague has lost, say a child, could you pick them up and walk through the door with them that first day back at work?

Because that re-entry is so intimidating.

**Zelena Khan:** And I think some people just don't know what to do. And once you understand grief a little bit more, I think that like kind of helps a little bit. We came across an article, it was on happiness.com, but it was interesting because they talked about the kinds of grief, right. And I'm sure you're familiar with some of them. Normal grief, disenfranchised grief, all these different kinds of grief.

And there are so many different ways to handle that, right? And I think you can handle it in many different ways, but I think the common thread, sometimes it's just being present. I've had situations where I'm like, I don't know what to say. There's nothing I can say to make you feel better, but I'm here. Can you talk about some of these kinds of grief and maybe which ones you think are more common than others?

**Emma Payne:** There are differing views about some of the terms, that the newer terms that are kicking around for us, we really, we have texts from hundreds of different grief experts from all different walks of life, with their wisdom and ideas. So we try not to net in one particular catchphrase, but also it doesn't really matter.

So I wish that grief coach had a service for anticipatory grief, which is all the grief that happens at diagnosis. And before a person dies. Now, I tend to think about grief as let's say that all grief is equal. So let's say that everybody experiences 100%, the exact same amount of grief and that it doesn't matter who the relationship was, everyone's 100%. There is a difference between how much of that grief happens before the last breath and after. So in a sudden loss, like a suicide, a hundred percent of your grief is happening after the person dies. But with anticipatory grief, if let's say you're caring for your husband and you're watching him deteriorate for a whole year before he dies. Well, you're grieving that whole time.

And then you're going to grieve again afterwards. So to me, whether it's anticipatory or quote-unquote normal, it's grief still, and everybody's different. And I think it's, the most important thing is to kind of normalize the experience

and understand that feelings are feelings. You get to have them whenever you want.

You can think, oh, I'm getting better at this. And I'm learning my skills and I really feel better than I did last year. And then all of a sudden, some memory of your wife comes into your mind and you're back where you were on the first day. That doesn't mean that there's something wrong. That doesn't mean that your grief is complicated or needs to be medicated.

It just means you're a human being who has strong feelings just as we do in love, right? We love differently and for different durations and in different ways, and our love can be triggered differently and so in grief. So, anticipatory grief is something I wish we were better equipped to support people with.

**Zelena Khan:** To switch a little bit into the workplace setting, companies have a variety of bereavement policies, and I think no matter what the company is or how great the policy is, I feel like sometimes it's never enough, right? Because sometimes depending on who the person is and how they grieve, a person might need to feel busy or a person might need to just be isolated. But either way, how would you say whatever the policy is, how would you say a manager or coworker can be more supportive to a person grieving? And maybe let's talk about the time. Because I feel like you can't really put a time on that person. Once a person experiences significant death or a significant loss in their life that's just, it's part of their identity, I would say, right?

**Emma Payne:** It's wonderful to see a lot of employers really digging deep on this now. Recently people like Facebook, Airbnb, General Mills, MasterCard looked at their bereavement policies. People have started to add in or specifically include miscarriage where they might not have before, so pregnancy loss. People are looking at their buckets of time and understanding that people might need to take it in different ways.

I mean in the U.S. the average number of PTO days for the death of an immediate family member is three days. So no parent can be functional at work three days after their child dies, right? I mean, but not everybody needs the bucket of flex time to be at the same time. As you said earlier, sometimes people are getting a lot more support at the beginning.

Maybe they want to be back at work. But you know what, maybe the funeral isn't even able to happen for three more months. And of course, they need

those days off. So, managers can be a lot more flexible about if and when time is needed. They can very thoughtfully look for things that can be taken off the plate and have other colleagues take them on for a while.

They can support their colleagues too, because they're nervous, awkward, don't know what to do. So if the colleagues are helpful, then the person's going to have a better experience. Ask them; some don't want it to be all hush and everyone going to whispers as soon as they come into their cubicle. They would rather just talk about what's happened.

We have like one text in our system, then we have texts for managers, and also colleagues, but one is about how colleagues can all join together and contribute a PTO day. And people love it. They're like, oh gosh, I never even thought about that. I didn't know I could do that. And then the HR department . . .

**Zelena Khan:** That's so thoughtful!

**Emma Payne:** So thoughtful, and it feels good, right? Cause the colleagues are like, "I want to do something that actually matters". And so a thing that colleagues can do is things like that.

**Zelena Khan:** Flowers are my least favorite thing to send. I think it's always nice to do something that's useful, like snacks and gift cards for food and things like that.

**Emma Payne:** I mean, for me, I think that a Grief Coach subscription is an amazing sympathy gift because yes, it's practical, but it's also really thoughtful. It says I understand that this is a journey and a long one. Here's something that you can carry with you over time. Yeah. Tactical but thoughtful too.

**Zelena Khan:** So for instance, if someone would gift a Grief Coach subscription, they could gift it to a coworker and they would put in the specifics.

And then if I had a coworker that I would want to support better, I could get a Grief Coach subscription as well?

**Emma Payne:** Yup. So the most common scenario is that a grieving person feels that they need more support than they're getting. They sign up

themselves. They add in their four friends and family, and then all five of them get texts.

But we absolutely have situations where the supporter signs up and the griever is not added in. We had some girlfriends whose friend's daughter died by suicide. And so the friend was not even getting out of bed and the girlfriends thought, "Hey, let us all get signed up, we're getting tips, suggestions, thoughts, specific to suicide loss, specific to suicide of a child".

And they found this amazing way to educate themselves. And then in turn support their friend who never even knew about it. It was just education, grief literacy for them. And then there's also the gift subscription option where you simply buy it for someone as you would flowers. And then they fill it in and decide who their supporters are going to be.

You order it online. They get an email that says Zelena has bought this gift for you. No rush sign up when you're ready. She just wants you to know that she's thinking about you.

**Zelena Khan:** Nice, nice. And a lot of these messages are coming from professional grief coaches, correct?

**Emma Payne:** We have hundreds of expert sources. And then we also have, I don't know, now I think of them sort of like channel editors. So someone that looks at our suicide series, a pregnancy loss person who looks at our stillbirth series. We worked with an amazing woman who spent her whole career on addiction loss and overdoses. So she looks at our addiction series.

And then lots of different hundreds of sources for it comes in. And I think the threat is that we are always going to be trying to normalize support, help people to feel heard and understood at a time that they often feel really alone.

**Zelena Khan:** So I know a person that's grieving. They may be listening, right? Maybe they're in a situation at work where they have all the awkward coworkers around them or a manager who doesn't know how to handle it as well. What's some advice you have for them?

**Emma Payne:** For the grieving person? What you described is what we hear 99% of the time. It's what therapists tell me is the moment at which they

introduced Grief Coach, because grief is, it seems always lonely. We have our sadness for the person who's gone, but we also feel desperately alone.

Like people don't understand what's happening and you feel so, you're overwhelmed. And so it's normal to feel lonely and overwhelmed. And it makes total sense, given all the physical symptoms that come with grief and the mental stuff and memory loss, all of the things. It makes sense that you're feeling this way, but, it will get better. And as people learn to support you and as you learn what your triggers are and what are the things that are helpful for you, you will get better. It's not that you feel less sad about the person, but you get better at remembering them in a happy way. You see that your relationship with them hasn't ended it's just changed. Yeah, they're still part of who you are.

**Zelena Khan:** Yes. I love that. But for like a griever, that's going back to work and maybe they're not in a relationship where they can say, "Hey, I signed up for this. I'm going to let you be a supporter, right? What can a griever do to help alleviate an awkward work situation?"

**Emma Payne:** Yeah, we have some suggestions for people. I think one thing that a lot of people find helpful is to have actually practiced a couple of sentences that they know that they can use. Have something ready to go about, if someone says something to you and you actually really can't go there right now, like, "I really appreciate that you're interested in supporting me, but this isn't something I'm ready to talk about with you yet."

Just practicing those sort of go-tos lets you feel like you can at least go to the office and be in the work scenario because if someone says "A", you've got your "B" ready. If someone's overstepping and they're like going on and on about their own loss and how, oh, I totally understand what you're going through, I felt exactly the same way when my dog died last year. Like, I understand that you care about me, but this isn't helping. And, if you would think that everyone's being totally quiet and not mentioning at all, then similarly, you can think about the kind of standard sentence that we can say. "I'm really, I'm, it's hard for me to be back at work."

"I'm sure that, you know, Susan died a few weeks ago, so I'm going to do my best and I'd appreciate you having my back if I need it."

**Zelena Khan:** I love that!

**Emma Payne:** Easier said than done though.

**Zelena Khan:** No, but it's just like, but you know, just the planning and it's, but that's like, so, that's such a practical piece of advice, right? Like it's better than saying everything's going to be alright.

**Emma Payne:** Don't do that! Please don't.

**Zelena Khan:** Yes, yes. Please don't do that!

**Emma Payne:** How long before you going to be back to normal? Oh, no, you'll meet someone else. I mean, for the supporters, that's where our grief literacy piece comes in, which I think actually is the most powerful part. No platitudes. No, "Oh, it's all going to be fine."

No, sort of sweeping it under it. Listen to the pain, acknowledge the loss. You actually don't have to say anything at all. Our supporters are so relieved when they discover that it's not their job to take the person's pain away because you can't. There's absolutely nothing that I'm going to say to you that's going to make you feel less sad that your sister was in a car accident and died.

And so that's why it's so scary to say nothing because we realize we're like impotent, we can't help. But you might love to tell me about your sister. You certainly don't want to feel that your sister has been forgotten and that everyone being quiet means that she's vanished from memory when you're taking the day off work because you're going to the funeral.

It's pretty wonderful if a colleague says, "Oh my goodness, I can't imagine what you're going through. I'd love to hear stories about Melanie sometime if you're feeling up for it. She sounds like a really awesome sister." I acknowledge, but don't solve; don't think you're going to solve because you're not.

And then usually the supporters are just relieved when they realize, like, it actually makes it easier. And people say, "Oh my goodness, but what if she cries? Like what if I say the wrong thing? And she starts crying." And then we say, "If she's crying, consider that you're helping her."

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah! And you also might've said the right thing that made the person cry.

**Emma Payne:** Tears are fine. Feelings are normal.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah tears are fine. But I love the idea, and I've mentioned it with other speakers this season, I love the idea of coming to work and being my complete self. And I feel the same way about my team. I want them to come to work and be their complete self, but there's also an amazing business case for it. And for productivity and things like that.

**Emma Payne:** Loyalty, attrition, we have a massive attrition problem. What works to balance that is like loyalty, feeling cared about where you are, it also, when people feel supported at work and their grief, we also see a reduction in workplace accidents. More productivity overall if the person can only do four half days a week, and that's just acknowledged at the beginning and is planned out for them and they know that they can like run and hide in their bedroom for half an hour, if they need to, it's fine. It's better than a person feeling stressed and trying to just work impossibly because then they'll, then they won't stay.

They'll leave. So, yeah, there are billions of dollars in lost revenue that come as a result of unsupportive grief in the workplace.

**Zelena Khan:** I have one more, I may have more than one because this is. But what about someone who is grieving, who is having . . . maybe their company, they used up their bereavement policy. They're having pressure to get back, to work, to be productive.

What advice do you have to those viewers that are grieving that might have, that might need more time away from work, or that are coming back to the office that are just not in an ideal situation? Like, do you have tips or maybe a bit of a script that they can talk to their manager or their HR people about?

**Emma Payne:** It's really difficult, right?

It would be much better if it was the manager initiating that, initiating that conversation, and seeing whether it's grief after death or whatever. It'd be better if managers could see that someone who was really struggling to be their full self at work and that they were overwhelmed by deadlines and that there might be something that we could do to support them as opposed to just weighing down more stress.

I think the best thing to do is to go to your HR department and send them a couple of links about, or even benefits, about some of the leading companies that are doing a better job looking at how to support people after that. So, sometimes bereavement benefits have just simply been overlooked. You can have all these other wellness benefits and bereavement, might just not have been something that they thought about.

That's roughly a quarter of U.S. employees who are bereaved right now, so.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah. And I think a big part of why it wasn't thought about is because it wasn't talked about.

**Emma Payne:** If we don't talk about it, then we don't support each other through it. So I think you're exactly right. Bereavement benefits will come. Most people that I talk to, have people who love them and want to help. It happens. Like this woman, which actually to your point, so she worked for a large bank. Her first child was stillborn, and she felt absolutely bereft because her child had died, but she also felt very alone. I kind of describe her as being preoccupied almost with the reaction of the people around her right? Like her husband wouldn't even talk about the baby.

Her best friend had flown across the country saying that she was going to help with the baby, but two days later got back on the plane and said, "I don't know how to be with you when you're like this." So the new mom is trying to go back to work. She's lactating; her office is waiting for her to do something. She doesn't have the baby. Her husband won't talk about it and her friend has left. So you're grieving the death, but you're also feeling lonelier than you ever have before.

And so in her case, she bought a Grief Coach subscription. She started getting messages about stillbirth, but she added her husband and her best friend in. And the friend two days later reached out to us and she said, "Thank you for understanding, this is hard for me too. I don't know what to do". And that's kind of how it usually, that's the story that I hear every day and 99% of the time. Most of us have someone that does care, but very often that person truly is like terrified and has no clue what to do.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah. I mean, we talked about the types of grief, but you know, grief doesn't always show itself with a sad person, crying. They can show an anxiety, they can show a complete coldness as well.

**Emma Payne:** And then we judge. And so I think again, that person's either, "Oh, they're dating too soon or it's taking them too long to get back to work".

Or we say that the word "still" should never be used when grieving. Don't say, "Oh, she's still sad." We have opinions about how it should be like, it's not helpful. All it does is apply pressure on someone when they probably would be ready to come back and do a few days, work a week. If they knew that they were supported, if they knew there was a backup, if they needed it, as opposed to just quitting because they can't possibly imagine coming back in and like leading a presentation the next week.

**Zelena Khan:** Yeah, yeah. And I, yeah, when you understand all of those things and all the factors that play into grief. It, it allows for a more supportive community, you know, so it's great.

**Emma Payne:** My experience is that people are good. When I first started doing this, my mom thought, oh my gosh Emma, it's going to be so depressing.

It's not depressing. Every day. I hear from friends and family who are so grateful to get just specific tips and reminders for how to help someone that they love. And they just don't know how. They want to. So I think the colleague who's nervous and just goes cold and doesn't have another cubicle, it's not because they're a terrible person.

We just have stopped talking about this. One of our expert contributors this woman named Dora Carpenter who actually runs an organization that trains grief coaches. And she talks about how we have in a business setting, we all get training about what to do, if there's a, say an earthquake or a fire, which fire escape, what to do. So we're explicitly trained in what to do if something highly unlikely happens, but we are not trained at all in what to do with something that inevitably will happen to all of us. I was like, "Oh yeah, that's such a good point.

**Zelena Khan:** That is a great point.

**Emma Payne:** This is a thing that happens. I mean, people die. So why not talk about what we can do when that happens?

**Zelena Khan:** That is the only certain thing in life, right? The only certain thing in life is death.

**Emma Payne:** Right.

**Zelena Khan:** Someone told me that, somewhere.

**Emma Payne:** And it's okay. It's okay. There are so many things that we can do to support each other after a death, to build our own kind of resilience and understanding after a death. Pain and sadness are okay. You don't have to pretend they're not there and sweep them away.

It's going to become part of the fabric of who I am. Another thing that has to vanish into thin air when someone tells me that grief only lasts three months.

**Zelena Khan:** No, I definitely love the "it becomes a part of who I am". Definitely. That's, you hit it right on the nail.

**Emma Payne:** And I think people are relieved in a way about that.

Like when the grieving person hears us say "It's okay like you're always going to have a relationship with your mom. And cooking her favorite dish for your children or going, listening to the music that she loved, or these are ways to maintain a connection with the people who are part of who you are. It's going to be different.

You're going to miss her. But there are things that you can do forever.

**Zelena Khan:** I love it. Emma, that's such a great way to end this conversation. Thank you so much for not only talking to us about grief but just like giving us some real, solid things that someone can do as a griever and that someone can do as a supporter.

If people want to get to know you and follow you and follow the Grief Coach, where can they find you?

**Emma Payne:** Instagram, also [grief.coach](https://grief.coach). If you go to [grief.coach/transperfect](https://grief.coach/transperfect), you can sign up and get a discount.

**Zelena Khan:** Yes, and thank you so much. I mean, I know you set up a \$20 discount that we can offer TransPerfect employees. So make sure you go to that link, [grief.coach/transperfect](https://grief.coach/transperfect). The regular price is \$99. So that's a really nice discount. So thank you for that.

**Emma Payne:** Yeah, you're welcome. And remember that's for a full year for the greeting person and up to four of their friends and families. Five people for a full year for \$79. And, you can use that same page.

**Zelena Khan:** Thank you so much.

**Emma Payne:** You're welcome. Such a pleasure.

**Zelena Khan:** Grief requires more energy to work through than most people expect. It can take a toll on us physically and emotionally. Opening up about the complicated emotions experienced, I think while scary, can actually help someone coping with grief. You never know who may be quietly struggling or not comfortable asking for support. In my experience, personally and professionally even the smallest gestures can have the largest impact. If you want to receive \$20 off a full year subscription to Grief Coach, visit [grief.coach/TransPerfect](https://grief.coach/TransPerfect) to get help for a loved one, or yourself. So I encourage you, be kind to yourselves, and be kind to each other and thank you again for joining us.

If you made it to the end of this episode, thank you, and be sure to keep listening. Also make sure you hit the like button, to subscribe wherever you get your podcast, so you can listen to the latest episodes of NEXT. And if you have a question, comment, or suggestion, or you just want to tell us how much you enjoy the show, we'd love to hear from you.

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