



GRIEF BRIEF

An Amethyst Remembrance

American poet, Emily Dickinson, was said to have had a fascination with death and dying. One of her poems in particular perfectly articulates an aspect of grief:

"THE LOST JEWEL.

I HELD a jewel in my fingers

And went to sleep.

The day was warm, and winds were prosy;

I said: "T will keep."

I woke and chide my honest fingers,--

The gem was gone;

And now an amethyst remembrance

Is all I own."

Besides wrapping your head around the 19th Century speak, perhaps what Dickinson was conveying is that feeling of longing. Sometimes it may be difficult to pinpoint that sense of longing, as it has a funny way of camouflaging itself as other emotions. But once recognized, longing can seem like an itch you can't scratch, like a hunger that cannot be satisfied. This week, we'll be discussing longing and attachment and how it relates to the journey of grief.

Existential grief--discussed last week--can feel a lot like longing for our lost jewel.

This jewel could be a loved one that is no longer with you, lost dreams, or even a sense of childhood nostalgia that can't quite be achieved. It doesn't really matter how seemingly big or small it is, whatever it is that feels lost is important because it was important to us. Like grief expert, David Kessler, says, "The worst grief is your own." Meaning, trying to size up your lived experience with those of others will never work because only you know what it feels like to grieve the losses you've had.

However, a common thread to each unique and different loss is longing. In talking about longing it is important to also acknowledge attachment. It has been said that attachment is the root of all suffering. So how can we differentiate between unhealthy attachment and love? The issue is that anything we become attached to is not permanent and so it is impossible to be truly satisfied with our attachments.

At this point, you may be saying "But aren't my friends, family, pets, and other things in my life what I should be attached to? Is this a bad thing?" On one extreme, think Gollum: "My PRECIOUS!"

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The gem was gone; And now an amethyst remembrance is all I own.

-Emily Dickinson