

A Long, Nagging Grief  
by Tom Peters  
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We all have done our fair share of grieving for a loved one, friend, relative, pet, or humankind for you philosophers out there. The type of suffering that invades our very soul and brings us down for a period, then life goes on, and you think of them now and then. The longer we live quite naturally, we go through this cycle repeatedly. And even though I was in combat at twenty years old, not one person I was emotionally close to died in Vietnam. However, two grandparents died during my one-year "tour" (a euphemism that seems funny now). A close cousin was killed in a car accident while serving in the Army in Ft. Hood, TX. It saddens me to think of parents losing a child, 'One of the worse 'clubs' to be any part of'. I know, I probably should have said 'One of the worse 'demographic statistically' to be in'. Knowing beforehand you're going to die is another 'club' I wish to avoid. Knowingly harming someone and they die 'club' sucks as well. Being born into a situation that never allows one to relax and enjoy life for the sake of enjoyment, another sad 'club'. Dying in infancy or as a young child is one of those cruel 'clubs' that might make one question your religious and philosophical beliefs. I recently looked into the eyes of a close friend who told me her brother died on Santa Monica Blvd., homeless. He was a vet and had been lost for many years and refused her help as he became ill and would not seek medical care. I mourn for this friend's entry into another 'club' one hopes to avoid in one lifetime.

Taking Emeritus classes since retiring, eventually brings up grieving every semester. Suffering is not built into the curriculum; however, we hear fellow students reveal the grieve they feel for someone who has died in their life or fellow students die.

I woke up this morning to a text from an old friend that his wife had just died after years of poor health following a severe stroke. Then I called my sister in TN to ask about the tornadoes reported in the LA Times, and she told me our sister-in-law's father died yesterday. So again, this will bring on various degrees of grieving but then turn into momentary lapses into a sadness that hardly slows down our daily lives.

A long, nagging grief has visited me for the last 10 years. It's oddly related to my age and my daughter's age. I've written about being an older father. Although I consider this part of my life extraordinary, I'm quick to say it's not for everyone for sure. In short, my years are numbered and my daughters, if you asked her, seem infinite. Here's the rub, I'm one of those 'seekers' from the 60s that equates the death of JFK with the end of our nation's future. The pandemic and Trump have tripled down on my belief that my beloved United States is headed into a grim future. I'm leaving soon, and she has to stay and fend for herself. I read the news and think of this every day. However, I'm one of those gifted 'compartmentalist' that can finish the news, be quiet, still....breathing, and grieving for a short time, then go on about the day. A day that I might have a chance to make brighter for my daughter.