

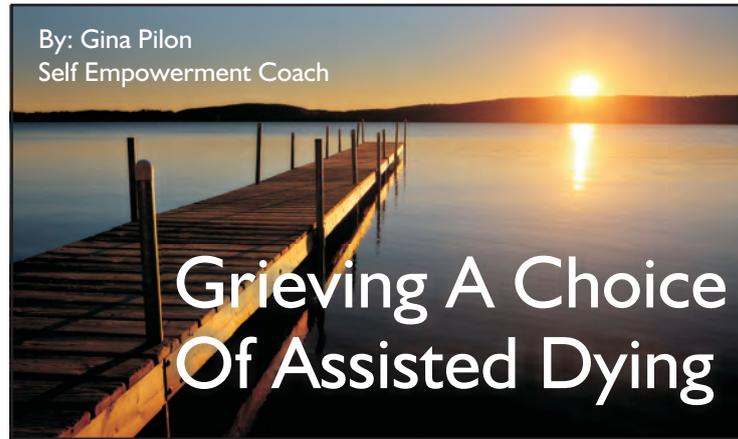
“Mankind’s greatest gift, also its greatest curse, is that we have free choice. We can make our choices built from love or from fear.”

- Elisabeth Kubler-Ross

If someone you know and love has chosen medical assistance in dying as a way to end their pain and suffering, there is no simple answer on how to grieve the loss. It’s just complicated.

It’s complicated because it goes against what we have always believed to be the natural order of dying. It questions our beliefs and morality. In our hearts and in our minds, medically assisted dying has a shock value that is similar to suicide, murder, and freak accidents. The thinking is that death isn’t supposed to happen that way, and it echoes within every fiber of our being.

We have not been raised in a culture that has subscribed to medically assisted dying until now (animals being the exception.) This is all new to us, and like it or not, most likely



By: Gina Pilon
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Grieving A Choice Of Assisted Dying

here to stay. So the challenge we have is how to deal with it. How do we grieve and mourn our loss in the midst of all this confusion?

First, we need to find acceptance. We need to accept the individual’s personal freedom of choice. We need to accept that not everyone is going to make the same choice we would make, and at the same time, we need to let go of the notion or belief that we would chose any differently if we were facing the same pain and suffering. Only until we have truly walked in another

person’s shoes can we rightfully say we would choose differently. And even if we truly would choose differently, we still have to honor and accept another’s choices for themselves. This is what unconditional love is all about; true compassion, love and peace.

Second we need to let go of the attachment to our beliefs. If what we believe will not allow us to accept someone’s choice, we will not be able to fully grieve the loss. Instead, we will only harbor anger, resentment and pain. We can certainly

maintain our beliefs, but just not attach a “rightness” to them and a “wrongness” to the beliefs of others. This detachment will help us fully grieve and forgive, if necessary, for our healing. This is not the time for pious judgment; not if we want to successfully navigate our grieving, find peace and heal our hearts. The two cannot co-exist.

Medically assisted dying offers an opportunity. It is a chance to make peace with someone, share sentiments never spoken, or feelings never expressed. It is a chance to say a peace-filled, heartfelt goodbye, giving the gift of compassion through unconditional love to them and to ourselves.

ASK THE EXPERT:

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