

# For Grief

By John O'Donohue <sup>1</sup>

When you lose someone you love,  
Your life becomes strange,  
The ground beneath you becomes fragile,  
Your thoughts make your eyes unsure;  
And some dead echo drags your voice down  
Where words have no confidence  
Your heart has grown heavy with loss;  
And though this loss has wounded others too,  
No one knows what has been taken from you  
When the silence of absence deepens.

Flickers of guilt kindle regret  
For all that was left unsaid or undone.

There are days when you wake up happy;  
Again inside the fullness of life,  
Until the moment breaks  
And you are thrown back  
Onto the black tide of loss.  
Days when you have your heart back,  
You are able to function well  
Until in the middle of work or encounter,  
Suddenly with no warning,  
You are ambushed by grief.

It becomes hard to trust yourself.  
All you can depend on now is that  
Sorrow will remain faithful to itself.  
More than you, it knows its way  
And will find the right time  
To pull and pull the rope of grief  
Until that coiled hill of tears  
Has reduced to its last drop.

Gradually, you will learn acquaintance  
With the invisible form of your departed;  
And when the work of grief is done,  
The wound of loss will heal  
And you will have learned  
To wean your eyes  
From that gap in the air  
And be able to enter the hearth  
In your soul where your loved one  
Has awaited your return  
All the time.

Storytelling in small groups or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next prompt and so forth. A person can pass.

- 1) When reading John Donohue's "For Grief," what word or phrases resonate with you?**
- 2) "When you lose someone you love, Your life becomes strange," Do these words stir up anything in you? Say more.**
- 3) What have you learned about grieving a loss that is helpful to you?**  
(loss of a loved one, health/illness, divorce/breakup, losing a job/friendship/dream/item, accident, etc.)

Check out and download more small group storytelling reflections and prompts at:

<https://lifesjourney.us/storytelling-in-small-groups-menu/>

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<sup>1</sup> [For Grief by John O'Donohue | Poemist](#) (accessed January 16, 2026).