



# Choosing Your Path

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The late Robert Frost penned the following words in his poem

## **The Road Not Taken**

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,  
I took the one less traveled by  
And that has made all the difference.”*

Many people find their journey in life takes them to a crossroad. They could turn down the road crowded with people taking the path of least resistance or they could take the other road – the road less traveled. This road is perhaps more intimidating because there are fewer people there. Fewer people have chosen to travel this road because it involves more risk and more personal reflection. Yet those who take the “road less travelled” find they arrive at a completely different place than the others. A better place.

The path of grief is similar. One can take the path of least resistance. On this path you are accompanied by people who pat you on the head and say, “Here, here everything will be OK. Dry your tears, keep busy, and above all, be brave for the rest of the family.” This road will lead you to a place where you run the risk of never resolving your grief and becoming locked in your grief.

The “road less traveled” is one where others will recognize that you are grieving. You will be understood and heard. People will respond to your needs, not theirs. You will be supported as you move into your grief and examine what this loss means to you. You will be given permission to rebuild your life. People who walk this road with you will support you in the decisions you make.

I believe that “the road less travelled” is the one that results in the most positive, most constructive resolution of grief. There are three important principles to observe when navigating this road. They are:

### ***Face realistically what you have lost.***

It may take months for it to sink in that the death has occurred. It may take a long time before you can begin to make changes around your home like disposing of personal effects. It will take a while before you can shop for groceries and accept the fact that you don't have to consider the likes or dislikes of the one who has died. Gradually, and sometimes without you making a conscious decision, life will begin to change in ways that indicate you are coming to terms with the loss. Don't resist this; it means that healing is taking place.

It is also important to deal realistically with the nature of the loss. You may have had a very difficult relationship with the one who has died. It is important to mourn reality. Resist the temptation to fantasize about a relationship that didn't exist. You may be mourning the circumstances around the death rather than the death itself. Don't be afraid to admit it if that is the case.

## ***Move into your grief.***

In other words, face your grief head on. If you feel like staying in bed, then stay in bed. If you are sad, then allow your sadness to flow over you. Shed tears. Let your mourning be your season of mourning. Active grieving will, itself, bring healing. The sadness, loneliness and anger you experience can lead you to a new understanding of life. The desert of grief is a time of soul-searching. It is a time of reassessing your life and coming to terms with what it means to carry on.

It isn't always helpful to set time-frames for grieving, but we know it often takes many months before grief begins to subside and the breezes of fresh life begin to blow. It can be compared to the way winter gives in to spring. Bulbs begin to appear only to be covered over in a blanket of snow. It may happen two or three times before the warmth of the sun is sufficient to melt the snow and the bulbs bloom once again.

## ***Take responsibility for rebuilding your life.***

While it is true that you would rather have your loved one back and in full health, the reality is your loved one will not return. So what will you do with the rest of your life? What do you want to do? Think of it this way. What did you gain from the relationship with the person who died that will help you to carry on? What did the one who has died give you that has made you a person who can deal with this crisis? The bottom line is this: would the one who has died want you to stop living or to carry on?

Ask yourself three questions:

*“What have I lost?”*

*“What do I have left?”*

*“What is possible for the future?”*

Answering these questions will give you a good foundation for rebuilding your life. And you will also pay tribute to the one who has died and the relationship you had.

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