



## What's Happening? Am I Going Crazy?

**By Evelyn Pechter, PsyD**

What's happening? I'm so spacey. I put the ice cream in the cupboard and the car keys in the freezer! I missed an appointment today! I've never done that before. Am I going crazy? Maybe I have Alzheimer's! Oh my! I'm just not me anymore. What's happening?

No worries, It's your grief. You're experiencing "Grief Fog."

Yes, it is a real thing! A mental fog and confusion are actually neurochemistry symptoms of extreme stress and grief. It is normal to be preoccupied, trying to make sense of the loss. All of these factors contribute to the fog of grief.

So, let's talk about some ways to help get through the fog:

Remind yourself that brain fog is normal in grief.

Lower your expectations of what you can accomplish some days.

Give yourself extra time for any task.

Start slowly to rebuild a daily routine.

Above all, be patient with yourself.

Although you will never be the same person you were before the death of your loved one, remind yourself that you will make progress in your grief journey. Your ability to function will not always be this challenging, and you

will eventually notice the fog lifting. You will find yourself again.

So how do you learn to find yourself? It's a good question. One way has to do with learning to ground yourself, which is a way of helping your-

self get more present and also help you get out of the thoughts that so many of us have when in grief fog. You know, those thoughts that can be hurtful, painful and mostly not true.

There are a few ways to get to that present/grounded place. I've often found it's helpful even when you are indoors to picture yourself outside. Sit comfortably and close your eyes and begin to think of what's outside, the



trees, the green grass, flowers. Nature can be very grounding. Just as a tree is grounded to the earth with its roots. It's a solid feeling.

Here's another way that may be helpful: If you find the kitchen a place of comfort, picture yourself in the kitchen cutting fruit and vegetables. Visualize each cut of each piece of fruit, thoughtfully, slowly and carefully. It's a way of visualizing doing something that's outside your thoughts.

Remember, grief fog is occupying your thoughts and detouring you out of the present. When you notice grief fog and anxious thoughts, check in with yourself, and see if you are grounded/connected to yourself or feeling a bit spacey and "out of body."

Here are a few more helpful exercises to bring you back to the present:

Sit in a chair with your feet flat on the floor and your eyes closed. Take a couple of deep breaths and visualize yourself in your garden, or if you don't have your own garden, picture yourself in a park. As you picture the grounds

of the garden or park, notice the feeling that you have in your body. Notice your shoulders are relaxing, that tightness you often feel from the grief is quieting. Consciously relax your chin, then notice your feet feeling connected to the ground.

Breathe in deeply, and as you exhale, feel the tightness begin to release. You might even notice that you sink a little deeper in your chair as the tension drains out of your body.

As you continue to sit quietly with your feet on the floor and your eyes closed, take a few more deep breaths. Intend for your body to be at peace.

Sit for a few minutes. Just breathe in and out, in and out, be aware of a solid assurance that both your feet are firmly grounded in present time.

Practicing some of these exercises may allow you to be a little more focused, a little more centered and aware. And that's the start of moving through the fog of grief.