Grieving Together

WHEN LOSS ENTERS THE HOUSE

> *Grief doesn't ask two hearts*
> *to break in the same direction.*

Sooner or later, loss enters every shared life. A parent, a pregnancy, a child's diagnosis, a home, a dream the future was built on. Then couples discover what nobody warned them about: two people can lose the same thing and grieve it as differently as strangers. One needs to talk, cry, and go back over it. The other goes quiet, gets busy, and holds it alone.

The danger isn't the difference. It is the story each partner tells about the difference. The expressive griever concludes: you didn't love what we lost, or you've left me alone in this. The quiet griever concludes: my way is wrong, or your flood will drown us both if I open my own gates. Two people, each sure they are grieving alone, in the same bed. Loss breaks couples less through the pain itself than through this misreading of each other.

What grieving couples need is not matching grief but accompanied grief. Permission to mourn differently, plus a bridge between the styles. The expressive one learns that quiet is not absence; sometimes love carries the casket without a sound. The quiet one learns to open the gate a crack on purpose, a sentence, a tear allowed to be seen, because total privacy reads as abandonment. And both learn the sentence that holds it all: “I can't carry it the way you do. But you won't carry it alone.”

BUILD THE BRIDGE BETWEEN GRIEFS

1. Each describe your grief style without apology: “When I'm grieving, I tend to ___. It helps me when ___.”
2. Make the misreadings impossible: “When I go quiet, it means ___, not ___.” “When I need to talk again, it means ___, not ___.”
3. Create a small shared remembering, a candle, a walk, a date on the calendar, so the loss has one place you visit together.
4. Give explicit permission both ways: to cry without being fixed, and to laugh without guilt. Both are grief. Both are allowed.
5. Check in monthly with one question: “How is your grief this season, and what does it need from me now?” Grief changes. Keep asking.

WHEN IT’S HARD

If the loss is one only a couple can know (a miscarriage, infertility, a child), the griefs can differ so sharply it feels like betrayal on both sides. It isn't. It is the same love leaving through different doors. This is heavy ground. Walk it with your therapist alongside, and be gentler with each other than seems reasonable. Then a little gentler than that.

TO SIT WITH

In past losses, how did you grieve? Who, if anyone, truly stayed with you in it?

Is there a loss between you that was never grieved together, one you each carried to separate rooms? What would visiting it together ask of you?

OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris