

# Episode 160-- Why Its Okay Not to Be Okay After Loss

📅 Mon, 11/29 7:28AM ⌚ 41:00

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

grief, people, impulse, human, talking, gun violence, person, sad, helpers, judgment, pain, grieving, therapist, awkward, life, avoidance, podcast, habituated, brady, happen

## SPEAKERS

JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Megan Devine

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JJ Janflone 00:08

This is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views thoughts and opinions shared in this podcast belong solely to our guests and hosts, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note, this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay, we find it disturbing too. Hey everybody,



Kelly Sampson 00:38

Welcome back to another episode of Red, Blue, and Brady.



JJ Janflone 00:40

I'm JJ, one of your hosts.



Kelly Sampson 00:42

And I'm Kelly, also one of your hosts.



JJ Janflone 00:44

And today we continue our series on grief and what we misunderstand about it, how to better support those we love, who are suffering and and so much more.



Kelly Sampson 00:52

Yeah, and I mean, it really is so much more. Because grief and loss are just so complex,



JJ Janflone 00:57

and to help us better understand how to manage our grief after a shooting or even if it just should be, quote, unquote managed, and how to better love those around us. Kelly and I are joined by the phenomenal Megan Devine.



Kelly Sampson 01:09

Phenomenal is right. And Megan is a best selling author, psychotherapist, grief advocate and now a podcaster. And truly, she has so much to share with us.



Megan Devine 01:23

My name is Megan Devine. I am a psychotherapist and a grief advocate and kind of a loud mouth about the ways that we show up and talk to each other when life goes sideways.



JJ Janflone 01:34

Yes, and you run an amazing, I think it's more than a website, honestly, at this point. Refuge in grief. Would you mind telling us a little bit about that too?



Megan Devine 01:43

Yeah. Refuge in grief is I love that you said more than a website. It's really, you know, we've been thinking about it as the "Grievers community." It is one of the only places I guess online or offline that talks about grief in really real ways, not as some unfortunate thing that happens to you that you need to buck up and put on a happy face and get through, but really a place for people to tell the truth about their own experience and know that that story that truth is going to be honored and validated and believed. And it's it's, you know, with the like Instagram and Twitter and Facebook, Twitter is really more of a place for people to yell at each other. But the the social media platforms for refuge and grief really are that place to come together and tell real stories about how hard it is to be human sometimes. And how hard it is to know what to do in the face of somebody else's pain.



Kelly Sampson 02:35

I think that makes it really obvious for listeners of this podcast, why we were so excited to talk to you because with gun violence, there is naturally grief. And so I'm wondering, you know, how do you define grief?

M

Megan Devine 02:47

I guess we'll go with a super broad a broad one. And then we'll dial it in a little bit because grief is a constellation of emotions and physical sensations and symptoms. But grief is the natural human response whenever someone or something doesn't happen. Let's say this differently. See, I you know, it's interesting. This is what it's gonna be like with me, everybody frets, when I try to define grief, even I get tongue tied. And I do this for a living. The thing is, is that grief is a natural, normal constellation of human emotions whenever we don't get what we want. And I think the reason why I trip on that is if your kid dies, or your sister gets cancer, that phrase, grief happens when you don't get what you want. Sounds really rude. It sounds really dismissive. But that's why I say we're going to take this like really big view right now that grief isn't just connected to death or chronic illness or injury. Grief happens in the everyday moments when life is not what you need or want it to be. And then I think we can dial it back in and say that that grief is something that we all share at different times for different reasons and all grief is valid. This does not bode well for my future writing definitions for Merriam Webster Dictionary, because I clearly cannot be concise about it.



JJ Janflone 04:11

Well, and I think that that leads in really, really well to one of the things that you talk a lot about in your work. We're gonna talk about your amazing book, too. But I think one of the things that comes out, and Kelly and I end up because we talked to survivors, you know, people who have been either impacted or, you know, left behind, really, that the way that we deal with grief and loss more in general in the US is really broken. And I think you lay out really well some of the reasons why that that might be culturally and I'm wondering if we could dig into that.

M

Megan Devine 04:41

Yeah, but basically the the down low on why the culture is so bad at grief. Yeah, yeah. And I think I think you know, I have this theory that I have not yet scientifically tested that the more out of order random atypical that somebody is lost, the more judgment that survivor that grieving person hears because it's like, we want to believe that this stuff doesn't happen to us. And of course, obviously, with gun violence, you can't really say it's unlikely to happen to you because it's freaking everywhere, right? But there, there are these things that we do to distance ourselves from an imagined apocalypse. It's like, Oh, you shouldn't have been to that place, you should have known where your exits were, you should have done this, you should have done this. And then we jump into policy combat discussions, instead of sitting in the intense realization that we're all connected. And that whatever happened to this person next to you could very easily happen to you in a number of different ways. Like there is no escape from experiencing grief in this life. And that makes a lot of people panic. And the reason why I come in this way, when you ask me about let's talk about how broken this culture is around grief is because the reason that we're so bad at grief, I think, is that we, we know, I think we can feel into how terrible loss might feel if it were us. And that fear is so terrifying, that fear of feeling that or experiencing that is so terrifying, we have literally built entire systems and industries around preventing loss from happening to us, or being perfectly okay, if anything unlikely ever did happen. Right. So this grief avoidance, this pain avoidance, which to me is really an avoidance of being human. This thing is centuries old, right? We have really pretty language to talk about grief avoidance now, right? Like, gratitude is a practice and whatever happens to

you, and it's gonna make you stronger and more resilient, and really lean into your gifts. And you would only know these gifts, if you went through hard times, like all of that crap, that we say in the face of hardship is really a pretty way of covering up how terrified we are of being human. And losing the people we love, or the body that we know and love, we really do have this deeply entrenched cultural system of preventing loss at all costs. And if you can't prevent it, then you somehow did it wrong. And if something does happen to you, and Gods forbid, you're sad, or you're angry, then we need to get you out of that as quickly as possible because happiness is the only measure of health.



JJ Janflone 07:23

Yeah, we need to bootstrap you out of this. Yeah, this needs to be a transformative, weirdly positive thing for you, despite exactly this incredible unfairness.



Megan Devine 07:33

And if you don't spring back, if you don't Bootstrap, and you don't come back bigger, stronger, better than ever before leaving a foundation and doing all of the glorious things you're supposed to do, then you're failing, right? And again, like, I know, I'm pretty wordy about this stuff. But we do that as a coping mechanism for not wanting to lose the things we love and the people we love. So it's not as easy I think as like, turning on the lights on this grief avoidance issue and how twisted positive psychology and like resilience porn and all of these things, like how weird all of that is, it's not as easy as just recognizing it and doing something different. Sort of in the same ways that you can't just like recognize systemic racism and the ways that you are benefited as myself as a white person benefited by systemic racism, it's not enough to just be aware of that. It's so deeply rooted. It's so infiltrated, I don't know if it's the right word, but like, it's in the air that I breathe, so I have to be extra conscious of it. The same thing with grief avoidance, we have spent so long as humans, trying to believe that everything will work out, okay it's not really enough to just say like, oh, right, it's okay for you to be sad. And leave it at that. Because the roots of that go much deeper. Speaking like a true therapist, you're like, in order to get to the world that we all want, where everybody takes care of each other really well, we have to dig even deeper. But we really do need to look at those reasons why we cheer people up, or why we think that cheering people up is the best thing to do. Why the gratitude as a practice, belief has such a stronghold, especially like as, as you and I are talking about this for coming into American Thanksgiving week holiday season, and even the whole end of the year holiday season, where we're talking about being thankful for what you've got. Right? And I think we often kind of weaponize that, that you have to be grateful for things and be glad for the life you have and the experience you had and the love that's been present in your life. All of these things. And again, coming back to that one simple question you asked me about, why is our culture so broken? It's like all of these ways that we try to avoid intense feeling, right, and we've literally built a whole culture to avoid feeling that's weird.



Kelly Sampson 09:59

I for one, I'm grateful for your, the way that you're talking about the roots and banding the bigger picture because I think it's really helpful, at least for me to learn. And I'm sure for listeners as well to really think about the context and kind of continuing along this track of

looking at where we are, one of the things in your book that you do that's super helpful in your books called *It's okay, that you're not okay* is that grief shouldn't be positioned as a problem that you have to solve. And so I'm wondering, we could dig into what that looks like a little bit and why we should avoid doing that.

M

Megan Devine 10:32

Yeah, thanks. I'm grateful for you too. What I love about gratitude, and I'm going to link this into the problem to be solved is that any good thing we lay down alongside a difficult thing doesn't cancel it out. Right? We're complex human beings, you can be thankful and grieving, you can be grateful for the love that you've had in your life and still be really angry that certain people have been taken from it. So this idea that grief is a problem to be solved is, is really, again, something that we've been doing for eons as humans, but the the sort of medical idea of grief is that it is a time bound difficulty that a healthy, I'm doing air quotes, air quotes here, a healthy person should be able to bounce back from very quickly and go back to work, not be sad, be able to function in the proper capitalistic society by being productive. And, you know, if you're thinking about your person, it's sort of with a a wistful glow, that maybe days for a moment, but that is gone, and you've taken your pictures down. And we just have this really interesting idea that health and happiness are the same thing. And that any of these uncomfortable emotions signify a lack of of health and wellness, right? Even the idea that we have positive and negative emotions, or light and dark emotions, one of my least favorite things, memes that goes around whenever you know, something terrible happens. And people are like, look to the light, like don't stay in the darkness. Like what's wrong with darkness. Right. I mean, little sidebar here, that whole thing where we put the good things with lightness, and the bad things with darkness is inherently racist, right? So and again, like we do this thing where there's this one way is the right way. And the other way is clearly the wrong way. And good emotions are good and light and positive and cheery and uplifting, and all of these other things and everything that is unhealthy, bad, sad, uncomfortable, angry is dark and negative and must be obliterated at all costs, or you're being the wrong kind of human. Like that's wacked. And the the thing that really irks me about that, well, there are lots of things that irk me about that. But one of the things that really irks me about that is that people believe it, there is this internalized belief, because it's what we've been taught this internalized belief that if you are still sad, six weeks after your person is killed in a crosswalk or with the audience that we're speaking to today, if you survived a shooting, or somebody you loved was killed in a in a shooting, or as a result of gun violence, like you get six to eight weeks to be sad about it. But then you really need to turn your ship around and start being thankful for the years that you had, maybe you should start a foundation, right? Like all of these things that we do to each other, trying to fix the problem of sadness or fix the problem of grief. And we do it to ourselves. Right? We're failing that cultural and mental health ideal of being resilient. You're not doing it right, if you're still sad. And I think this is, now I know that this is my special thing so maybe other people don't share this particular lens. But I feel like most of our public health issues all have unspoken grief at their core. Because if you can't say out loud, that you are still upset or still sad, or still feeling really bereft or lonely, six months after your brother was killed, that pain doesn't go away. If you can't say it out loud without being cheered up, or corrected or told it's not that bad, or that other people have it worse, you're going to stop talking about it. But that pain doesn't go away. And one of the things that is starting to get studied right now during the last couple of years of the pandemic is the effects on isolation on mental health and physical health on relational health. And I read those studies, right? We're like, oh, the isolation of the last couple of years has had real biological impact and neural neurobiological impact and social skills and relational skills. And I'm kind of like, let's widen that lens out a little bit. Because for

decades now, people have been silencing their own pain because it's not okay to talk about out loud. There are a lot of people who have been living Oh gosh, I'm gonna badly paraphrase a dead white poet here, but like "lives of quiet desperation," right? Like, a lot of people feel isolated in their own lives because they can't tell the truth about what's going on for them.



JJ Janflone 15:15

And you bring that up too in your book that like everyone has a take when you are grieving that, like everyone has a take on your grief, which is such a personal and contextual thing too. Like, I think that that's part of it as well, that culturally we have a view of even when you do grief, what that grief is supposed to look like and what sadness is supposed to look like. And so if you differ at all, you know, from that norm a little bit, and it's definitely-



Megan Devine 15:40

A personal norm to write like, oh, I believe you should go back and do this. And that goes back to my opening ramble here about it's that cultural discomfort with intense feeling that makes us do all sorts of weird and wonky things. And that judgment of other people's grief is an outgrowth of that, like, there, I'm sure that you all remember this. But after the Parkland shooting, there was a whole bunch of stuff on Twitter. So I say that twitter' is for yelling. They're under some of the, the media clips of the survivors there were therapists, actual therapists chiming in and saying, don't let the kids do this, this is bad for them. And I'm like, Oh, God, don't listen to the therapists. And then other people saying, they're too, those kids are too angry. And then other people saying they shouldn't be out there protesting they should be protected and taken care of. And then other people, there was a photo of some of the kids eating pizza, and a couple of them had smiles on their faces in the photograph. And man, the comments under those photos, saying, "Oh, they're not that sad." Look at them smiling, like the attacks on how are these people who just survived something horrific? The attacks on how well they're performing? Their grief, like, step off, man, I was so mad. And I may have had some choice things to say about that. But exactly what you're saying here is that when something horrific happens, judgment, just swarms out of the woodwork, right. And again, that's a coping mechanism. Those judgments aren't based on anything real, right? Because everybody's got a different opinion. They're smiling too much. They should be smiling more, they're protesting too much they shouldn't be protesting. They shouldn't be like, ah, there is no "should be." In that kind of situation, there is only what you need to help yourself get through the next minute and the next minute. But that swarm of judgment is an outgrowth of our deep discomfort with how tenuous life is, and how hard it is to be here. Sometimes, we will literally do anything to avoid feeling that.



Kelly Sampson 17:54

I know you mentioned earlier, you know, given that we are uncomfortable with how tenuous life is that when some something horrible happens, or something is sudden, there's more judgment associated with it, because we're trying to distance ourselves from that. And unfortunately, in the work that JJ and I do, we're working with survivors every day. And all these are people who have lost someone suddenly to gun violence. And so I'm wondering if you could unpack a little

bit more, what exactly is that coping mechanism? Like? Why? Why do we act that way? And also from the other end, for the person who's experiencing the loss, how does a sudden loss impacts a person who's grieving?

M

Megan Devine 18:38

So that judgment mechanism, that's a good phrase for it, I'm going to try to remember to keep calling it the judgment mechanism. That judgment mechanism, it's, you know, it's a reaction, right? That is something that we do not just in sudden death or any death related grief, but in a lot of different ways. Our very first reaction to hearing a statement of pain is to correct the person. Right? So I'm going to use a really low stakes, simple example here. You're standing in line at your favorite coffee shop outside wearing a mask sufficiently distanced. And you ask the barista when you get up there, how their day is going, and they say, not that great. You know, my dog was sick all night. I didn't sleep that well. I woke up, I was already late, I missed the bus. And then I, you know, got here and people were cranky. And the very first impulse, the very first thing we want to say as well, at least the sun is out. Right? If we're feeling particularly cranky that day, we might say you're lucky you have a job. Right? Just as an impulse, our very first impulse on any statement of pain is to correct the person who says it. And that is a function of that really long history of we don't like to think that there are things in the world that hurt that we can't resolve. We are always trying to reorder the world and have it be under our control even those little tiny things, and I love that example. Because sometimes I think people can distance themselves from a conversation about how we distance ourselves because we think like, eh that's only a skill I'm going to need in case of emergency like, this is actually a foundational human communication skill to erase other people's pain. And we do it to ourselves too right, like, other people have it worse than me, at least I have a job to go to, right. So if we do that kind of judgment, internal and external, and we do that sort of this can be fixed with the right attitude, reframing on the low stakes things, when it's really not a threat to our understanding of the world, or how we see ourselves than when we do encounter a situation that completely dissolves our faith in the safety of the world our faith in public spaces, our understanding of what we expect out of a given day, right? If we do that sort of weird judgment on small things, when we are faced with a potential with the understanding that this nothing really is under our control, that terror makes us dig in our heels even more strongly and get even more adamant, that one, nothing bad will ever happen. If something bad did happen, you are somehow to blame for it. And if even though it would never happen, something like this ever did happen to me, which it never ever, ever would because I do everything right at all times and I pay attention to my surroundings and I'm always aware of things. But if something like this ever did happen, it would not undo me. Because I would grieve better than this. I would not be destroyed. I think at a really deep level, not consciously this is not what goes through your head when you ask the barista how their day is going. And they say it's terrible. And you think I'm going to correct them out of this, this is an impulse, right? But that need to believe that we are in control of the safety of the world, for ourselves and for the people we love. And that sort of after thought, belief that should something happen that was truly truly out of my control, I would be okay, and everyone I love will be okay. That is a survival impulse. And if you're not aware, if you don't know that you should be looking for it. It is going to come up in honestly, I, maybe I'm pessimistic but I would say 90% of human interaction is somewhere in the pain avoidance spectrum. And this is what a lot of the Eastern traditions talk about a lot, right like that you're not in control. And that is really horrifying. And look at all the things that humans do and have done and continue to do to assert some idea of control over the world.





JJ Janflone 23:06

And it makes me think too, like just sort of not being not being comfortable with these conversations and like not having them at an early age like we're at this point. I mean, fingers crossed. The pandemic taught us that this isn't exactly the case. But like, by the time we think we get out of middle school, we're habituated, right, you like cough into your elbow? Because you practice these things. Yeah, right. You're not supposed to push other children, when in line for coffee, right? We learn. But if you don't practice these things, then you end up making I think, like a lot of blunders and a lot of gaps. It's just like you don't get again, you don't get that training and kindergarten, you don't get that training in HR.



Megan Devine 23:41

You do learn, you do get that training. But what you get is your job is to cheer people up. Don't let people be sad look on the bright side, if you look at all of our storylines, right, Disney, movies, television, picture books, all of these things are about the hero of the story. Cheering somebody up if you're thinking picture books, like rabbit was having a sad day and his friends came over and brought him balloons and cake and then everything was better. Right? So we are trained from a very early age that sadness is okay, because all feelings are okay. But make sure you get your friend back to happy. And then you can actually I mean that's really sarcastic, snarky and overly simplified, but that is the hero's journey. That is what most films and books and storylines are based on here is this person who's living their life. Doo doo doo doo doo and then something happens. And that's a dramatic moment. And then they fall into the abyss and the whole story is digging themselves back up out to the next Vista where they turn around and see how far they've come. How strong they are, how much they've learned about the world and their place in it and then they ride off into the sunset so we are taught we're soaking in it, that bad things happen, unless you're careful. And our jobs as humans is to not let ourselves stay in anything that is uncomfortable too long, don't let yourself stay in it. Think happy thoughts, pick yourself up, dust yourself off, get back out there. Or if you see pain happening around you, that is your job. So we are taught that from a young age, which is why I come back to like this work of unlearning what we've been taught as social animals as what's the word that I want, as I was going to use vulnerable organisms, but I think that's, that's different than because vulnerability gets thrown along round a lot. I'm just like, sort of talking about how tenuous life can be right, like human bodies are very strong. And they're also very fragile.



JJ Janflone 25:46

We're not well designed animals, as it turns out.



Megan Devine 25:49

You know, like, it's, this is part of being embodied, right? Like things go wrong. But it's this, it's this practice of being curious about why we do things, and not just accepting that this is the way that it happens. Like, this is part for me of being a social scientist, right? Like, but why do we do that? Like, why do we do? Why do we do that thing? Right? So there's some like cultural awareness, there's some being human awareness. And I do, I do see this inculturation around



positive and negative negative emotions. I do see that starting to change. I think that sometimes listening to me rant about this stuff can feel kind of bleak. But I think if I felt like it was 100%, bleak, I wouldn't bother doing this. I would just like go soak in a corner somewhere. But I do see these conversations happening. And I have seen even, even at younger ages, people starting to have more nuanced conversations about sort of being curious about feelings, being curious about hurts. What's this like for you? Right? I mean, the the interesting thing is that when we allow people to be in as much pain as they're in, it actually has a natural life cycle, which is not to say that grief ends and it's over. That's not what I'm implying here. But like, if you tell somebody to stop crying, they might be able to suck it up and stop crying. But again, that pain to go anywhere. Yeah, on the flip side, if somebody is crying, and you let them sob it out, the body will naturally come to, for that session, a cessation of sobbing, right, like you got to let the gesture complete itself. And I do see some more of that starting to happen these days, not just with kids, but with everybody, or with grownups, too. Like, I like that the sensation of sobbing, like when you allow things to complete their own cycle. I mean, it seems weird because it's messy and uncomfortable, but like the real, quote, unquote, healing there is letting people feel whatever they feel and letting that emotional gesture complete itself.



JJ Janflone 27:55

I think that that just like letting people feel what they feel is like, it shouldn't be a revolutionary state.



Megan Devine 28:01

I know. But it is



JJ Janflone 28:02

yeah. right!?



Megan Devine 28:04

Whoa, mind blowing. Yeah.



JJ Janflone 28:06

And because it's difficult, right? Like, it's far easier for that to be a Pinterest tattoo than it is for it to be like an actual thing that happens? Well, and it's just how people will say maybe after a very public shooting, like "I'm here with you, like I'm grieving with you, I understand how you feel." And that comes from a very sweet place, but it's really, you know, do you actually know how this feels, though, because this person is missing from your table-




Megan Devine 28:30

... ..

You know even in non violent, non sudden public event losses, like we do this to each other all the time. I remember, it was just a few months after my partner drowned, that, like I ran into somebody at a coffee shop, and they're like, how you doing? And I was like, not that great. And they were like, why? And I looked at them. Matt died. And they went, you're still sad about that?

 Kelly Sampson 28:58  
Oh, oh, my goodness, what?

 Megan Devine 29:01  
And here's the thing. Yes, that was a stupid thing to say. But here's the thing. Their life went back to normal because they had a normal to go back to. They weren't missing him every second of every day because he was never in every second of every day for them. And that's what you just described Kelly, right that like when people say, we got you like, do you really, because you're not living with his absence in the same way that I'm living with this absence. And it's not to like people who say that aren't usually trying to be jerks. They're operating in that deep, like, centuries old grief avoidance thing and they're just not aware of it, but they think they're being helpful and it's honestly offensive. My life went back to normal and the sun is shining. And I want that for you and they wouldn't want you to be sad while you are on the outside looking in. On this, and again, I come back to like, for me the most skilled response is curiosity, right? I can feel into, fantasize, really a negative fantasy about what this would be like for me if I was in your position. And frankly, that's weird. But I have no idea what it's like to be you. Do you want to tell me about it? Like, I can go to a coffee shop now and feel normal. But I wonder how different that is for you? Do you want to tell me about it? Curiosity about somebody else's true lived experience. That is the empathy move right there my friends. And that's even true within single family and friend groups. Right? If we go to a public shooting at a school or anywhere where there's a community, everybody there lived through the same event. But not everybody there lived through the same experience. Right? So we don't want to conflate things there either. I think sometimes when I start talking about this, I can hear this exact exasperation of people who truly want to be helpful, like, "Fine, I won't say anything. There's, there's nothing I can do. That's correct." Well, you're right, there's nothing that you can do. That's correct. Unless you can turn back time and make this have not happened. The only acceptable solution for the problem at hand, right? So it's not that you have to know the exact right thing or that you can never mess it up. I stick my foot in my mouth all the time. And I do this for a living. What's different is hopefully that I recognize insensitive things, about halfway through saying them. And I'm really super good now at saying I was just about to say something that's totally not helpful. Let me start over. Right, this process of becoming kinder, and more inclusive, and more supportive is not a switch that you turn on and off. It's a continuum. It is a practice, right? Just like meditation is a practice, it's a practice, because you don't do it correctly. And once you're done, like being human is a practice. And once you start being aware of this stuff, and aware of your habituated responses, you can start being more confident in your awkwardness. Right? I mean, I think that that is what a lot of people want in their pain is not that you say the right perfect thing, but that you're willing to be weird about it, so that they feel loved and supported.

**K** Kelly Sampson 32:23

Yeah, I appreciate that. What you're saying when you're saying, empathy, and curiosity is sort of going, it can be easy to sort of distance yourself physically and emotionally. But it sounds like what you're saying is actually move towards it and just sit with the person and ask questions and don't run away. And I'm wondering if there are any other words or advice that you would offer to listeners about how we can support people, because most people listening to this show, have very likely lost someone to gun violence, or as you said, if it's not gun violence, obviously, grief comes in all forms. I'm just wondering if there's any other words that you would want to share with listeners?

**M** Megan Devine 33:06

Yeah, one of my favorite relational tools, tricks, so if somebody is talking about something that's bothering them, anything from a small thing to a life altering thing, if you have an impulse to jump in and make it better for them, right, the impulse isn't wrong. It's how you've been trained. Don't worry about it. But a great thing to do is to say, you know, my impulses to jump in here and give you some suggestions or to cheer you up. But I want to know what you need right now. Do you want empathy? Or do you want a solution? Do you want a sounding board? Or do you want an action plan? Right? Like, we always want to be offering permission or consent back to the person we're speaking to, right? And that that can sound really laborious, but really like, just like with anything else, like getting consent for anything else? Like it's easier if you practice, right? I'm not sure what you need right? Now. Do you want an ear? Do you want to problem solve this? How do you want to approach this? Right? No right or wrong answer here, but it's just really cool. To offer the person you care about the space to make a decision about what they need in that moment. What we very often do is like, Oh, you just need me to like, Okay, this is this is an insider therapy thing. Like, you know, some, some therapists really like to like, reflect back what the client just said, right? And that works in some situations for some clients and for other people. Like, they're sitting there with their therapist, that they waited six months, six months on the waiting list to get into and the therapist just repeating everything, they say back to them, like, is this what we're gonna do? You're just gonna reflect everything I say back to me and not give me any advice? Right. So let's say it's the same sort of thing we're talking about here. Sometimes reflection and validation is exactly what somebody needs, and sometimes an action plan is exactly what somebody needs. Neither one is correct or incorrect. It's all situational, so as a helper as a support person, and this is for the pros, and for the not pros, just for friends, it's always a good idea to ask your person, what do you need right now, here are the things that I can offer for you. Right? We so badly want to make things better for the people we care about that is a beautiful human impulse. Right? It's how we go about serving that impulse, that things get a little sketchy.

**K** Kelly Sampson 35:25

I know I can speak for JJ, when I say that we are just so grateful for all of the wisdom and clarity and levity that you've brought to this subject. And I know it's going to help a lot of our listeners and so I'm wondering, with a book out, you have a podcast that's coming up. What should people be looking for from you? And where can they find it?

**M** Megan Devine 35:46

Oh, the things. Okay, so where you can find all of the things we are @refugeingrief on all the socials except not on tik tok. I just haven't gotten into it yet. Sorry, everybody. So at refugeingrief on Instagram, on Facebook on Twitter refugeingrief.com, is the website. And the new podcast is called "here, after." And it's honestly it's about a lot of the things that we were we've been talking about. It's how does the helper show up. We've got a really big incoming crisis in the health care field where we've got like all this pain that we've been talking about, that we've been talking about here together, and all of the grief and all the losses that have unfolded over the last several years, everybody has lost something. And if we look at what we usually say is like, go talk to the helpers, look for the therapist, talk to your medical providers, well the medical providers and the professional helpers have been living in this disaster as well. And there's a lot of pressure on them. So "here, after" is my new podcast coming out on iHeartRadio. And it's about helping the helpers navigate their grief and their losses on the job, but also how any of us who see ourselves as helpers, show up for each other and show up for ourselves with the skills that we really need to provide the love and support that we most want to give. It seems weird to say about a show that is really about challenging human things, but it's really fun. The way that I look at this stuff is it's gonna be awkward either way. When you encounter difficult times in your life for the people that you care about, it's awkward, to not say anything, because you're afraid of messing it up. And it's awkward to sort of fumble around and try to learn better things to say that are more supportive. So if either option is awkward, let's choose the awkward direction that has a better chance of resulting in the kind of relationships and the kind of support that you most want to give to the world. So show up it's called here, after you can find it on iHeartRadio on Apple podcasts, and wherever you get your shows!



JJ Janflone 37:50

It's always going to be an awkward and strange and weird conversation when we're like, tell us about one of the worst things probably that's ever happened to you.



Megan Devine 37:57

It's awkward, like let's just embrace that.



JJ Janflone 37:59

Yeah, but it's better than not talking about it. Exactly.



Megan Devine 38:03

Yeah, not talking about it has created the world that we have now. Right? Where public health issues and violence and all of these things. So clearly, we have given not talking about it a really good go and it is time to try something different.



JJ Janflone 38:20

Oh, my goodness, Kelly, did you take notes, I took so many notes.



Kelly Sampson 38:24

Megan was truly truly amazing. And I really loved how she challenged us to question our impulses.



JJ Janflone 38:31

100% same. So how are we going to use these tools she equipped us with? You know, I know for me, I keep coming back to what she said about us being like habituated to think we need to cheer people up.



Kelly Sampson 38:41

Yeah, I'm really appreciated her calling that out. And sort of relatedly I keep coming back to Megan noting that sometimes our own fears are what causes us to center ourselves, rather than centering the person who is grieving.



JJ Janflone 38:55

And I love that she pointed out like that it's not like with malicious intent too, right? It's just like this is very human response. And so I think, just so useful. So moving forward, I know for me, top of top of line for me, I'm going to stop talking to survivors or about survivors from this perspective of I need to cheer you up or make you feel better. You know, instead, I'm really going to try and focus on like, I'm going to listen to you and what you need to say at this moment. What what you need from me in this moment.



Kelly Sampson 39:28

Yeah, and I mean, that's definitely take away from me. And another one is when I feel that impulse of like, this is scary, and how can I make this better for me when talking to a gun violence survivor, because I do have those impulses. I'm going to take a moment and question that and instead try to make myself think about okay, your fears aside, what does this person need? And how can we center them?



JJ Janflone 39:54

Hey, want to share with the podcast? Listeners can now get in touch with us here at Red, Blue, and Brady via phone or text message! Simply call or text us at (480) 744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever! Kelly and I are standing by.



Kelly Sampson 40:09

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