

CHRONIC ILLNESS, GRIEF & IDENTITY

MAKE ROOM FOR LOSS WITHOUT REDUCING YOURSELF TO A DIAGNOSIS

Chronic illness can change routines, roles, work, relationships, energy, body image, plans, and expectations. Grief can recur as circumstances change.

NAME WHAT CHANGED

- Energy, mobility, independence, income, work identity, parenting, social life, sexuality, hobbies, food, sleep, or future plans may shift.
- Some losses are temporary, uncertain, or recurring.

GRIEF IS NOT INGRATITUDE

- You can appreciate what remains and still mourn what changed.
- You do not have to perform positivity to make other people comfortable.

IDENTITY IS LARGER THAN ILLNESS

- List roles, values, relationships, skills, culture, spirituality, interests, humor, creativity, and qualities that remain yours.
- Illness can matter greatly without becoming your entire identity.

ADAPTATION IS NOT GIVING UP

- Mobility aids, accommodations, medication, rest, changing work, asking for help, or doing an activity differently can protect participation.
- A different route can still move toward the same value.

RELATIONSHIPS MAY NEED UPDATING

- Tell people what kind of help is useful.
- Renegotiate chores, plans, intimacy, caregiving, and social expectations as capacity changes.
- Reciprocity does not have to mean equal physical output.

WHEN GRIEF BECOMES OVERWHELMING

- Persistent hopelessness, severe withdrawal, inability to function, or suicidal thoughts deserve clinical support.
- Ask for care that understands both medical realities and emotional impact.

You can grieve what changed and still build a meaningful life that fits the body and circumstances you have now.