



## **THE MOURNING PIN**

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Grief doesn't end at the funeral or the cemetery, although the rest of the world would like to think that the bereaved have achieved "closure" at the funeral and are now ready to "move on". Grief doesn't end at the funeral. In fact, it's just beginning. You don't stop loving someone just because they died. So why should the bereaved try to hide their sorrow just because the rest of the world can't stand to "see" them hurt? The bereaved have long ago learned of the importance and necessity for masks.

Why won't anyone let the bereaved simply be bereaved? Why can't we sometimes wallow in the hurt or to wander in the emptiness of our heart? Are we all afraid to recognize pain? Are we afraid to speak of hurt in such honest terms or are we simply unaware of the length of time that healing requires? Have we truly become the "Fast Food, Fast Forward" society where microwaves and email have replaced homemade brownies and handwritten notes?

Even when someone does ask, "How are you?", their footsteps carry them quickly away before I can even think of an "appropriate" response. Does anyone care any more or have we run out of time for caring?

I'm bereaved and there are days when I want to share that and days when I don't. But no one can tell the difference because I have learned to wear THE MASK and to always look the same, regardless of what is dwelling just beneath my surface smile. I have learned, as we all do, to smile quickly and to turn away slightly when the tears threaten to spill down the cheek. The MASK is in place.



I don't want to wear a mask any more. I have run out of energy to pretend that I am "FINE" when I'm not and to smile even when my heart is breaking inside.

Maybe bereaved people should LIMP abit on those days when we feel scattered or shattered or hurt or empty inside. Maybe we should recognize the depths of the wounds that grief inflicts instead of trying to soothe the rest of the world.

I have noticed that people are nicer to those who limp abit. We hold doors open for them. We offer them a seat on the bus. People who limp a little seem to get more sympathy and understanding than I do in my grief. I'm not asking for a LOT of sympathy, in fact, maybe none. But I would like some comprehension that grief isn't something you "get over" quickly (or ever).

I'd like to let people know that I still am capable of moments of extreme pain, even years after a loved one has died. And that when I experience that pain, I don't want to wear a mask. I want the freedom to hurt and to heal, both publicly and privately. I don't want to limp in order to have a kinder, gentler world at my door.

I just want to BE, whatever I am whenever I am. No more masks...just me trying to hang on one more day. I want a sign, an outward symbol of my bereavement so others will know that I am bereaved, not crazy or sick. I want something to wear that will tell everyone I am working my way through a terrible hurt.

In the "Old days" black armbands were worn to acknowledge one's bereavement. Some cultures still wear a piece of torn cloth to symbolize the tear in the family fabric. Some communities still place a black wreath on the

door of a grieving family so others may know of their hurt and offer their support.

I want a sign that says "I'M BEREAVED" and I want a hug. At least I'd like your understanding that I am not ill or mentally incapacitated. I just hurt today and I could use some support.

Since signs and masks are too cumbersome, I've found the perfect symbol. You've seen it on lapels everywhere, in many different colors, each carrying a special message. I've found a **MOURNING PIN** that is a simple and dignified way to saying, "I'm bereaved". It is a small, simple black enamel ribbon pin, similar to the ones you've seen in red for AIDS awareness, pink for breast cancer, green for organ donation. This one is black for bereavement and can be worn anywhere, anytime you want to recognize your bereavement.

The awareness ribbon has become a universal symbol of support and compassion and those who wear them become members of a universal family of understanding. What a terrific way to create a community of support! No longer will grieving people have to limp a little in order to receive some small amount of care and support.

Entire communities have worn this ribbon to show support for those caught in the web of pain and sorrow that bereavement brings. Individuals can wear the **MOURNING PIN** whenever they wish to acknowledge their grief: anniversaries, special days, or every day. By wearing this outward symbol of grief, we can start to push back the clouds of misunderstanding surrounding grief and bereavement and help strengthen the universal awareness of grief.

Let's create an openness and a tolerance and an understanding of the universality of grief and a willingness to be present for each other.

Whenever you see someone wearing a black **MOURNING PIN**, you will know that a life has been lived and loved and that sorrow isn't a weak or negative face. No more masks, please. Let grief have its place among the living as a symbol of how much you loved.

We are all fellow strugglers on the path, but grief is a journey that does not have to be traveled alone. Wear the black ribbon pin to support those who grieve or to acknowledge your own bereavement. You will not be alone. We are a universal family, broken by death, but mended by love.



(You can order the **MOURNING PIN** from Grief Inc.  
[www.griefinc.com](http://www.griefinc.com) \$2 plus shipping and handling).