

## Episode #116: Growth Grief



### One Year from Now with Hailey Thomas

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There's no right way for growing an online business. And honestly, me and my guests are more than fine with that. I'm Hailey Thomas, and this is the podcast that lets you be a fly on the wall for candid conversations and mini lessons through a variety of online entrepreneurs who are growing their businesses based on their own visions. We are on a mission to normalize and laugh about the behind-the-scenes truth of achieving a new level of success in your business. This is One Year from Now.

00:48

Hello, hello, hello, my beloved podcast listeners. I hope you're doing well today. We are going to get into a kind of heavy topic called growth grief. We're going to talk about ending things, things dying. We're going to be talking about actual death, we're going to be talking about the discomfort and sadness that comes with leaving a stage of life or a particular time in your life behind. I want to say this is going to be a heavy topic, but maybe it's not. I just think it's really useful and important to talk about because as we continue to mature as entrepreneurs, we will continue to encounter grief. I think you can only grow and have room for joy and happiness and the light to the same extent that you make room for grief and death and endings. Those two things go together for me, you cannot have one without the other, and you will only have one to the depth in which you participate in the other, they go together.

01:52

So, we're going to talk about growth grief. I love having a name for this because multiples of my clients already have million-dollar businesses or are approaching the million-dollar mark, and they're all experiencing, or had shared it within one week, this experience of grieving. Grieving is defined as mental or emotional suffering caused by loss or regret. Mental or emotional suffering caused by loss or regret. It's a strange thing to talk about grief when we're talking about growing. So, these folks are, like I said, approaching the million-dollar mark, they are hosting large 60-person in-person events for the first time. They are selling assets and have more cash on-hand than they've ever had before. Their businesses are growing, but they feel this mental and emotional suffering because of the change.

02:53

So, the first thing I want to say about growth grief is that it can catch you off guard. In those moments where you're growing, and you're like, "Why don't I feel good? Why am I not excited? Why am I sad?" It's the growth grief. So, I want to give word to it. It can catch you off guard. I think sometimes, we think about our first million as the end, right? Like, that's where we want to end up, is having million-dollar businesses or being an entrepreneur that has a portfolio worth 1 million or 2 million. Right now, if you're on this side of your first million, that's what your eyes are kind of pointed at. You feel like the closer you get to it, the closer you're moving to quote unquote, the end. But this is really just the beginning, your first million or first 2 million, your first 3 million, it's just the beginning of who and what you are going to create in your lifetime. We're practicing things ending and new things starting, that will continue that emotion of things ending and new things starting together over and over and over again.

03:57

It feels as though it's not supposed to happen this way. Like, you're supposed to be happy that you're growing and making money and the business is changing and developing, or you're pivoting, but it is supposed to happen. You are supposed to grieve endings and losses. I think sometimes we are

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

completely on board with the idea of grieving death when someone passes. We are kind of on board with grieving the ends of relationships, definitely romantic relationships. But there is a grief period that happens when you end anything. When you end long friendships, there's heartbreak there. When you end even short romantic endeavors or dalliances if you will, there's a little bit of heartbreak, a little bit of grief that happens there. When you pivot your business from one type of asset to another, or when you change assets, or let's say you're moving from having lots of business assets and then you're going to maybe transition away from those and into a W2 role for a little bit, there is an ending and the ending is marked by grief.

05:05

It's doubly hard if you don't acknowledge it. It makes everything worse if you don't call it what it is, see it for what it is, and actually treat yourself with some compassion and actually process the grief. It makes everything worse because you're thinking there's a grief itself. We're going to talk about what it is, but there's a grief itself. And then, you have thoughts of judgment on top of it that says you shouldn't be grieving, you shouldn't feel sad. "I'm making more money, how is it that I feel sad?" But there is an ending. For all new things, some things have to come to a close, to an end. And even if it's the right time, and it is good, and it is correct for that thing to end, there is still grief involved, because of the ending, alright? So, unprocessed grief or unacknowledged grief makes good situations harder to transition through. If you continue to collect unprocessed grief. It comes in, and you process it out, and it comes in, it's kind of like a stream, if you will, right? If you dam up the stream and block it up, the water starts to get nasty and murky and lots more mosquitoes come and all those things, instead of just having grief come in, and being able to process it and come out. It's a much cleaner experience. That is a much more mature, emotional way to be. That's what we want. You're not mature emotionally, if you don't feel anything. It's not that if you dam things up and don't feel anything, then that's what makes you mature. No, what makes you mature is that you're able to feel it and process it.

06:37

So, we're going to talk about a couple different things today, kind of the multifaceted-ness of grief. We're going to talk about how to feel grief. And yeah, kind of some of the stages of transition that are along the stages of grieving that I think are important to apply to business as well. So, grief is, like I said, mental or emotional suffering caused by loss or regret. Grief is multifaceted emotion, emotionally. So, it is deep sorrow, but it's also a whole plethora of emotion. When we had the live event for One Year from Now: The Residency, which is my group program for high-profit, high-impact entrepreneurs, where we get clear about what they want to create a year from now and then work on that together as a group for a year. We had our live event back in June, and we talked about growth grief. One of the questions I asked was: What emotions do you feel when you are ending things? I just want to read you some of the things this group came up with. You might feel conflicted, denial. You might feel grateful, hopeful, defensive, judgment, anxiety, fear, happiness, sadness, relief, lonely, bewildered, doubtful, unsure, embarrassed, excited, liberated, exposed, pensive, misunderstood, angry, anticipatory, peaceful, powerful. You might experience powerlessness, disappointed, shame, vengefulness. I don't even know how many that is, like 20 things I just said. When you are experiencing grief, it is multifaceted and any number of those emotions and at varying levels of intensity you can feel.

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

08:47

So, I think the first step is just to write down what emotions you are feeling and let them be at odds with each other. Let them be in tension with each other, so that you can feel at any point in time both relief and anger. You can feel both bewildered and excited. You can feel both grateful and exposed. All of them you can feel together. I think the first thing is just to write down and try to parse out: What exactly am I feeling? And I want to remind you with feelings, the words that I'm seeing right now, they are what we call the sensations that we experience in our bodies. I know what terror feels like in my body. It feels like spiders crawling up my spine, my throat gets really tight. I want to kind of bow my shoulders over forward. Usually, there's some bile and nausea feeling, that's what terror feels like in my body. Excitement feels like there's butterflies up in my throat and up in my chest and I feel a little like shaky because my adrenaline is going. It feels like confetti. When I feel grounded and whole, I often compare it to like, a lump of gold. Warm and heavy and grounded and rooted.

10:05

So, all of the emotions, the words we're using to describe emotions have physical sensations with it. You might have a hard time parsing this out, if you are a person that spends a lot of time in your head, and not a lot of time being tactile and in your body. Holy crap, it took me several years to get good at being able to know what emotions I'm feeling and ride out those emotions. I guess that's something that doesn't get talked about again. I will have an episode about feeling your feelings again, because it's important, but this is a side note, my first time in therapy in probably 2013 or 2014, multiple sessions, multiple 60-minute sessions, I paid someone just to sit there with them. It would take me sometimes 30 to 40 minutes at a time to figure out which emotions I was feeling. So, we would talk about a thing, and then would take me 30 to 40 minutes to be like, "I think it's anger, I feel hot. I think shame feels more like this, I think I'm mad." Sad was a hard one for me to get around to. Scared I felt pretty often, so that one I knew but like, I'm adding this as a side note. This doesn't mean anything about your brilliance and your excellence and your capacity as an entrepreneur if you are growing your understanding of what it means to be in your body and how you feel your emotions. In fact, it is necessary that you go through these steps and just because if I'm asking you like, what do you feel and you can't put a name to it immediately, nothing is wrong. You just have not built the understanding, the knowing, the knowledge to identify that in yourself yet.

11:41

Okay. Alright, back to the main thing. So, any number of these emotions, you might feel altogether, and they can be all jumbled up, all of these come at the end of something. You might also feel a sense of completion. That's another feeling where you just feel complete, whole, there's still grief in that. I would offer that you can feel grief about a pivot, a change in income streams, you can feel grief about the end of a business relationship, firing someone or someone leaving your company/ We're going to talk about the stages of grief, but it's not like, "This will take exactly four weeks and I will spend one week in this stage and one week in that stage, and each feeling will feel separate and different." Grieving is messy. It's messy, all the stuff is mixed in together, you will feel them with different intensities at different times. Sometimes, you won't feel anything. Sometimes, you will feel it all. Sometimes, this whole process that I'm about to lay out, you can work through in like, 40 minutes, or 10 minutes and it not be a big deal. Sometimes, it's this thing might take several months to grieve, even though it's a good thing that's happening. You might be changing from, for instance, one-on-one services to group services and the

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

grieving process for you, because of how sold you were on that other model and how good you felt how sturdy you felt, to move into another model where you feel less secure, that might take lots of months.

13:15

This is a reason we don't like grieving because we cannot control how long it takes. The only thing you can do is be available and hold space for yourself as you grieve and as you need. I will tell you right now, every time you go, "I don't have time for this," it will take longer. However, it is you feel about grieving, your body, your nervous system, your brain is gonna do it. So, you can either hold the space for yourself to do it as you need to, as you go, or dam up the river, slow everything down, and I mean everything, until the dam bursts when you don't want it to and you're knocked on your ass and have to grieve anyway. So, you could do it later, you could do it now, it doesn't matter how you feel about it, this is what needs to happen. When you allow it to happen and are here for it and aware of it, then you have a little bit more control over it. You can be with it more and have a little bit more of an active role in it. I have had times in my life where I have not grieved and pushed it away, pushed it away, and then the dam just breaks and I'm just literally knocked over by the force of it. I had no ability to control it at that point, no ability to manage it, no ability to manage my life and my business decisions around it. I was just knocked on my butt. This process of understanding growth grief and allowing it to happen, knowing that it happens as you pivot, gives you a little bit more of an active role in it and you can be more proactive in experiencing your grief.

14:43

So, I just briefly want to talk about the stages of grief, if you Google the stages of grief you will find these, and how this pertains to grief as we're going through growth grief. So, the stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Like I said, you can experience all of these at once, multiples of them together, you can leapfrog over steps and go back to them. Sometimes, it might take a few minutes, a few days, a few months. You might ping pong back and forth through them. Again, this is why grieving is hard, because it's not clear and we really like clear steps. Grieving is not clear. So, one thing that stops us in growth grief, and again, why we need to address it, is you are going to start planning your next stage of growth. But if you are planning it, if you are trying to do logistics from this damned up place, this place where you have not processed the old thing, you're going to be making decisions influenced by some of these gnarly, heavy feelings that just need processing for you to move through them, so you can get back to making decisions from a more sound, more grounded, more solid place.

15:59

That's, again, if we're talking about the value of grieving, and why you should pay attention to this at all, you will make better business decisions as you process your grief; much more high-quality decisions than if you are all dammed up with these big heavy negative feelings. You'll start making decisions trying to get your business to help you not feel so bad, when in reality, you need to process these emotions separate from your business decisions. So, anyway, we don't want to logistics the next thing until we've done some level of processing, and it's not a, "First, I grieve, and then I do the thing." Again, it's like eating and pooping, you eat, you poop, you eat, you poop, it's a cycle that goes together.

16:39

The first kind of three stages, I would put in a bracket together, denial, anger, and bargaining is awareness that a thing is over. So, the minute that you move into denying that you need to make a change is a minute that your brain has already decided that the old thing doesn't work, and it's time to move on. So, you honestly are probably ending things sooner than you think you are, which is so fun and was an eye-opening thing at the live event was like, "Oh, by the time you start denying that it's not that bad. I mean, it doesn't quite work, but..." By the time you start doing that, you're already grieving the end, the ending of that thing, of that relationship, of that point in your business, it's already begun. So, there's the denying, which is, "No, it's not that bad." There's the anger of, "Goddamnit why doesn't this work?" There's the bargaining of like, "Okay, well, maybe I can retain this person, retain this relationship, retain this model, if I do this or that." That's the beginning of the grieving. When you know you're at that place, you have outgrown where you are coming from. It's time to move to the new thing. I think about hermit crabs and their shells, right? It's like, "Okay, well, I could keep the shell on so long as I don't move too fast. So long as nothing big tries to get me because I cannot pull my body all the way into this shell, right?" Like, it's the time in which that shell, that model, that relationship worked is officially over, by the time you move into these first three stages of grief of denial, anger and bargaining.

18:18

Then, I would say this is where the action happens. You have depression and acceptance. We are not talking about clinical depression here, we are talking about experiential or situational depression. Again, it could take a moment of deep sorrow, of disconnectedness. It could be a long time, weeks, months, and then acceptance as well is a more active thing. It's once we know that the end is here. We are grieving, we are processing, we are giving ourselves space and time, and have rhythms that support our grieving. We are talking, if talk therapy is useful to you, or talk modalities with friends, with family, with a coach or trusted therapist. We are sleeping more, drinking more water. You were actively being depressed. I don't know if that's a thing, but I think about my depressive episodes, there's me resisting depression and then there's me actively being depressed, in which I'm like, "No, I do not have the energy or capacity or desire to do fucking anything. I'm barely existing." And so, when I have the wherewithal can be actively depressed, meaning I'm making room for myself just to feel nothing, numbness or deep sadness or sorrow, and I'm not resisting it. That is an act of, I think, self love, and also an act of grieving and making room for these experiences of depression and experiences of all the emotions that we talked about in grief.

19:51

There's also acceptance in that, which I'm a big fan of ceremony around ending. I don't mean ceremony, like lights and wine, it's not a party. I think it's acknowledgement. The acceptance is like the acknowledgement. It's a ceremony of acknowledgement. So, as a very small example, I often take the time to say goodbye to things. So, last night, and this is a small example, but I think it matters. Last night, I got rid of my old cosmetic carrying case that I've been traveling with, I believe, since I got married. So, almost 10 years. It's very small, not even really all that functional anymore. I got a lot more stuff, so it's just time to move to another one, but I've had this one for a long time. It has been to Ecuador, it has been to Spain, it has been to Ireland and Scotland, it has been to Haiti. I travel with it, it is my cosmetic carrying case, it is just a solid thing in my life. Now it's time to move on to this bigger case. So, before I throw away the old case, I did transition all my stuff, I just held it for a second and I

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

just said, "Thanks. Thank you. We've been through a lot. We've been together for a long, long time, but it's time for me to have new adventures and move on to a new thing." I mean, the whole thing took maybe 20 seconds, but just said thank you out loud, and then I throw it away. It was not a big thing, but it did that moment signify a significant change for me, and how I travel and how I care for myself and making sure I don't have room for all of my stuff. It's just time for an upgrade, and so there was a little bit of ceremony. Nobody was with me, it took 20 seconds, but a little bit of ceremony, a little bit of acceptance, and I'm moving on. Sometimes, I don't think we acknowledge the fact that we're moving on from a model. Like, we're moving on, and it is sad, that's what the acceptance acknowledgement is. We're moving on from a model, when we're moving on to another role, or we're moving on from a team member, even if we know it is necessary, our time with that thing or way of being is complete, even grieving or doing kind of a ceremony, it's an acceptance and acknowledgement of how we interact with our audiences as we continue to grow, right?

22:04

So, I had someone I spoke with a couple of weeks ago, who was just feeling some sense of grief, because she used to know everyone that she enrolled in her group programs, but because of how well she's been doing, she's enrolling people she doesn't know, she's never seen this person before, she's never talked to this person before, right? So, there's a sadness and a little bit of hesitancy around a natural evolution of growth in her business that just feels like, "Oh, no, that's not me, do I want this?" There's a lot of emotion around it. It's what she wants, but there's grief that comes with that. And so, just acknowledging like, "Hey, this is amazing," right? I'm kind of in my head right now picturing a couple of different scenarios, maybe making a list of all the names that she doesn't know, or her very first 20 people that she did know really, really well and just, again, for herself in a Google doc, not to be shared with anybody, just thanking the past version of her that created those people that nourish those relationships, and then another list of the new people like, "I don't know, you and I cannot wait to love you," just to acknowledge except the transition, okay?

23:15

So, as you are experiencing the denial, anger, the bargaining, the depression of it, the acceptance of it, then, or next to, you can move into the logistics of the new thing. I promise you, you will feel lighter, you will feel less uncertain. There will still be feelings of uncertainty but lighter, less uncertain, and ready for the new thing. As you grieve, as you grow, it creates certainty and readiness instead of feeling like you walked into this hallway and didn't close the door behind you. You're like, "Should I go back to the door? I don't know. Is this the new thing?" Like, go and close the door, help you and your nervous system in your brain know that we are out in the hallway, we don't know which door in this hallway is going to open next, but we are here. We are present in this hallway, we are ready for the next thing, and that's what I think grief does, is help you to be ready. So, when I say feel your feelings, particularly grief, what I mean is identify and experience the sensations and emotions in your body. It is without judgment, sitting and allowing yourself to feel the physical sensations as they are happening.

24:38

Alright, so, my favorite is when my brain is like, "You don't have time for this! You don't have time for this." I have occasionally had moments where I need to sit down and I'm grieving for two hours. That very often happens at the end of the day, and it looks like me sitting on the floor and rocking and

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

moaning and not even crying. I'm not even crying, I'm just sad. I'm just so fucking sad. I'm just grieving, and I can feel the tightness in my chest and I'm not trying to push it away. I'm not telling myself this shouldn't be there. I'm not even trying to figure out what it is I'm sad about. That's another thing, you don't need to explain it. You just need to experience it. Sometimes, it lasts two hours. Sometimes, it lasts eight minutes. Sometimes, it's just five minutes, where I'm like, "Oh, man, I am feeling so mad and I feel hot, and my jaw is tense and my hands are tense. I'm so fucking angry." And I just let myself be angry for a few moments, and then it just passes, like a wave over me. Then, I can come down emotionally, drink some water, I stretch out all the places that were tight, right? I just let myself experience the sensations and the emotions in my body as I can identify them. And even if I can't, like I said, can't identify them, I let them happen.

26:06

Sometimes, they come up while I'm on a call, while I'm talking to someone. I am triggered into an emotional experience, but I'm like, "I don't have time for this shit right now because I'm in the middle of a call, or I need to set this aside." It is okay to come back to it, so long as you have a practice and a plan to actually come back to it later, to actually sit down for 10 minutes later and be like, "Wow, what just happened? What happened earlier? Oh, she said this and I had this feeling of regret, oh man, that feels bad." And just sit with it for a minute, right? You don't have to do it immediately, but you do have to work it in. So, with some clients, this might be TMI, but we made a plan of small moments where they can feel their feelings, where they can grieve when they're in periods of growth through out their week. I do it either in the shower, after I get out of the shower, at the end of the night. I do that very often. Sometimes, I do it between calls, when I can do a short spurt between calls, but I mainly do it at night, to be honest. I have other clients that have decided to feel their feelings first thing in the morning as a part of their journaling practice. I have clients who've decided to feel their feelings when they poop because they're very regimented poopers, and they know they're gonna poop three times a day, so they have these moments. "Well, you know, I'll take my bathroom break and then just take a few minutes and see what it is I'm feeling and go from there." It doesn't matter when or how you do it, it just matters that you do it in a way in a time that works for you. So, you are consistently processing, this is a consistent ongoing thing you will do until the day you die because we are humans. It's like eating and pooping, you have to keep eating and you will continue to poop in your life, I did not realize I'd be talking about poop so much in this podcast episode, but it's not one and done.

28:04

You have to have compassion for the fact that grief is a thing you will experience, not just when someone you love dies, it will happen as different stages of your business die, as parts of your identity as you mature die, as your business leaves one stage for another, as you change team members. You have to have compassion, none of that, "I shouldn't feel this badly. It wasn't a big deal," bullshit. Because whether or not you think it was a big deal, your body's nervous system was responding with exactly how big of a deal it thinks it is. So, it doesn't actually matter what you think about it, it is doing what it needs to do. So, you need to experience the sensations and the emotions in your body, it's very simple, without chasing them away. I would offer the question I ask, especially when I'm sitting and feeling a feeling is: Is this motion pushing it away, or am I allowing it? So, sometimes, the clenching of the fist and the toes and the jaws and of the eyes is me trying to push an emotion down and I have to actually let that go and let whatever comes up comes up. Sometimes, the squeezing is a powerful

## Episode #116: Growth Grief

squeeze, because I want to squeeze. You have to pay attention to yourself. I think that's the crux of all of this, you have to pay attention to yourself, you have to make time and space to pay attention to yourself. Let the waves crash, acknowledge it, and keep going. Keep going because it's not a one and done. You're not weak and this is not horrible, because you're experiencing this grief. No, you're just grieving the end of a stage, the end of a way you understand and relate to yourself, the end of a work relationship.

29:46

Alright. There's probably more I can say about this, but I want to leave this here because I want you to walk away with action and understanding and awareness. Growth grief is just a part of entrepreneurship. It is a part of being alive, but we grow so rapidly as entrepreneurs that without this awareness, we think we're doing something wrong. Or like, "Oh, maybe this is a sign I shouldn't move on yet." No, it's just growth grief. I want you to know what it is and know what to do with it. If you'd like to chat with me more about this, you can find me on Instagram, I'm @BrainspaceOptimized. You can go to [BrainspaceOptimized.com](https://BrainspaceOptimized.com) to find the show notes and all the other stuff I've mentioned in this episode, along with other episodes of this podcast.

30:36

I want to make you aware of two ways in which you can work with me One Year from Now: The Residency, which I mentioned earlier, is my 12-month group program for high-profit, high-impact entrepreneurs. We are launching the next cohort of this small group program in October, so you can get on the email list and become aware of that when the time comes this fall. In the meantime, I do coach people one-on-one. I believe, as of today, the end of July, two open seats on my roster for one-on-one coaching. That is called Iterations, and it is a 16-week cycle, where we think about what's just your very next iteration. What are you growing into? What's just the very next thing you are maturing into? And then, we get very specific and deliberate about making that transition and shepherding who you are now into the very next version of yourself. So, if you'd like to know more about that, you can email me at [Hailey@BrainspaceOptimized.com](mailto:Hailey@BrainspaceOptimized.com). Or, send me a DM on Instagram. Okay, thank you for tuning into this episode. I will see you next week.

31:47

Thank you for listening to this episode of One Year from Now. You can find the show notes and all the links we mentioned at [BrainspaceOptimized.com/Podcast](https://BrainspaceOptimized.com/Podcast). If you want to chat me up about all things entrepreneurship, then head to [BrainspaceOptimized.com](https://BrainspaceOptimized.com) and join my email list. This is where we have rich conversations about the experience of business ownership; it's thoughtful, it's funny, I like getting responses and chatting with you all, it's a good time. Lastly, you can find me on Instagram @BrainspaceOptimized. We will see you in the next episode.