



It's OK to Grieve Celebrities More Passionately Than Others

by Elizabeth Sindelar-Loy
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This past weekend basketball legend Kobe Bryant, his daughter and seven others tragically lost their lives in a helicopter crash in California. From the time the announcement was made on TMZ until now, social media has been flooded by masses who are grieving his loss and those who are posting, “What’s the big deal?”

Now, before you go judging a friend who has posted that they are grieving over this tragic event, please remember that grief is a complex emotion that can stem from a plethora of reasons. The human brain is an extremely complicated organ that allows us grieve without providing a rulebook on who we should or shouldn’t mourn.

Unfortunately, when a celebrity passes, whether tragic or not, an excessive deal of judgement goes hand in hand with the fondness our society has for the person. One common question asked tends to be, “Why do we mourn celebrities more profoundly than that of police, EMS, fire or military personnel?”

The simplest answer: our culture has allowed us to become interconnected with celebrities we don’t know personally through the bombardment of coverage on internet, television, radio and print. Dedicated fans have a tendency to know more personal information regarding the celebrity they idolize over best friends or even family. Plus, the last time I checked, the US Government did not have trading cards with bubblegum or fantasy leagues for military personnel.

Celebrities are far more to the majority of the population than just figures we watch or listen to on our devices. They remind us of who we are or who we ultimately want to be in life. Celebrities live the life we have been told for generations is the American Dream. Therefore, looking up to them allows us to dream bigger and set goals higher than we may have imagined.

Plus, we form strong connections with celebrities through the comfort and entertainment they have provided us over the years. Being lost in their art can be an escape from world we deem as harsh or a beacon of hope. An artist’s music could have helped you through a hard time in life. Watching sporting events can make it easier to bond with others, in turn creating fond memories. A television show or movie that a celebrity starred in may have inspired you to take action in your own life. Or a personal struggle of celebrity may have hit close to home. Which is why, when a celebrity passes, the loss of their ability to create new art can feel like a monumental loss.

Media coverage absolutely does not help us when high profile people pass due to the twenty-four/seven news coverage. They know exactly how to tug on heartstrings which can make it very overwhelming for those who have been through similar traumatic events in their lives. The grief reaction to a celebrity passing may not be for the specific celebrity but because it reminds us of a loved one or a similar experience in our past we endured. Emotional trauma is not a physical mark on the human body but it has very real health consequences which can be triggered over a tragic celebrity death.

Therefore, even if you don't agree with people grieving over a celebrity death, there still is a certain level of respect that should be shown to those who are. Posting or saying insensitive remarks regarding said loss may seem humorous but in fact be causing someone you care about great harm. Humans love to have their feelings validated (Hence, why Facebook is so addicting.) but, when they are not we end up feeling worse and completely unsupported by those we thought cared about us. Being told that our grief is irrational or crazy, can create a feeling of rejection and an inability to be honest with feelings. If that occurs, the person feeling ostracized may even distance themselves and spiral downward to depression or look for a substance to escape the pain they feel. So, before you click the post button on your comment, please think twice and make sure what you are declaring about a celebrity death does not harm those on your newsfeed.

Elizabeth Sindelar-Loy is the Wellness Coach for Main Street Chiropractic in Edwardsville. She has worked in traditional and holistic health care for over 8 years. Ms. Loy is a motivational wellness speaker and participates in multiple Madison County Coalitions. As a single mom to an ambitious little girl, she understands the importance of practicing self-care to achieve balance in personal and professional growth.

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