

# Daughterhood the Podcast: For Caregivers

## Episode #39: Grief and the Holidays with Naila Francis

49:16

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### **SPEAKERS**

Naila, Rosanne, Disclaimer

#### **Disclaimer 00:02**

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#### **Rosanne 00:43**

Hello, and welcome to Daughterhood the podcast. I am your host Rosanne Corcoran Daughterhood Circle Leader and primary caregiver. Daughterhood is the creation of Anne Tumlinson who has worked on the front lines in the healthcare field for many years and has seen the multitude of challenges caregivers face. Our mission is to support and build confidence in women who are managing their parents care. Daughterhood is what happens when we put our lives on hold to take care of our parents. We recognize this care is too much for one person to handle alone. We want to help you see your efforts are not only good enough, they are actually heroic. Our podcast goal is to bring you some insight into navigating the healthcare system provide resources for you as a caregiver as well as for you as a person and help you know that you don't have to endure this on your own. Join me in daughter hood. Naila Francis is a writer, grief coach, death midwife, ordained interfaith minister and creator of This Hallowed Wilderness, which provides compassionate presence and holistic support for the journey of grief, loss and dying. She holds space and offers ritual for people at many of life's sacred thresholds, including birth, marriage, death, and other transitional passages. Her work is often informed by her love

of poetry, the gifts of healing rooted in nature and community and her commitment to expanding our grief literacy and Death awareness. She is a founding member of Salt Trails Philadelphia, a community grief experience honoring grief through gatherings, rituals, and art. For many years, Naila worked as a journalist, interviewing prominent artists from all backgrounds Naila and I talk about expectations, permission and listening to what you need as a Griever to move through the holiday season. I hope you enjoy our conversation. It really doesn't matter what holiday or perceived holiday it is. When you feel that loss. You feel that grief. It's important, especially in this grief adverse society we live in to acknowledge that this is happening. And this is happening to everyone. Yeah, because everyone has lost someone at some point. Yes.

**Naila** 02:54

Yeah. The moment like the decoration start coming out, and the jingles and all the flashiness and the merriment and I'm always like, this is not the most wonderful time of year for everyone. In fact, if you took a poll, you might find that it is really leans more toward the other end that it is the worst time of year for a lot of people.

**Rosanne** 03:18

I mean, I believe that on so many levels, and it's like when you lose someone, you're you're trying to rearrange your life.

**Naila** 03:25

Yeah. Yeah.

**Rosanne** 03:27

And in doing that, it's like, what am I keeping? What do I have to let go of? Because there's a lot of things that you let go of, whether it be the tangible things of clothing, or items and that kind of thing. But it's that grief of then letting that go also?

**Naila** 03:45

Yes, that's a really good point. Because I also feel like that's part of why people stick to doing things during the holidays, but they don't really want to do because if I decide to scale back or cancel or do whatever it is, am I letting go a little bit more of the life I used to share with this person? am I letting go of their memory? Does that mean they're somehow not as important to me? There's all this weight, we put on these things, all this attachment that aren't really necessarily essential to the relationship when it comes down to it. But it's hard for us to see that.

**Rosanne** 04:25

Yeah, yeah. And last year, my mom died in May. And when it came time for Christmas, it was like, you know, I was still in a fog. Yeah, I put I put a tree up, but I didn't put any ornaments on and that was my way of trying. I was trying. Yeah, but I wasn't fully like whoo it's Chris. Like I just and, and I'm I'm wondering with that because there's a lot of ends like, we want to celebrate, and we want to hide. Yeah, we want to have honor them. And we can't get past that. Griefy feeling?

**Naila** 05:04

Yeah, yeah.

**Rosanne** 05:06

So what do we do with all of that Naila? How do we cope with that?

**Naila** 05:11

You know, I just even love what you just shared about the tree. Because that, to me feels like such a poignant negotiation of that space, because it's like, marking, that it's Christmas. And yet, you know, the ornaments, all that flash, and that dazzle and all of that, you decided not to put them on. So it's like, this is what I have capacity for right now. This is as far as like, go and letting yourself be okay with that. Right? Yeah, I think that's really beautiful. And sort of honoring your own intuition around that was really, really amazing.

**Rosanne** 05:54

Thank you. Thank you. It just, it felt like it felt like that was okay. For me. And I think that's the part that we have to allow ourselves to do what works for us. Yes, I know, you've spoken about that you've written about that beautifully. Can you talk a little bit about how we have to tap into that feeling to those feelings for ourselves during these times?

**Naila** 06:21

Yeah. And then feelings are so present, and amplified during the holidays. But I think there still sort of that whole narrative that we're carrying forward into the holidays, if we haven't been feeling our grief the whole year, and haven't been willing to make space for it, then we're surely not going to invite it in and say, have some eggnog once Christmas comes up. So I do think it's really important, again, like you were saying, just to honor what our body is saying, just to really be present to that as much as we can. And whatever it looks like to be more in our bodies, and in the present moment, whether that is going out in nature, and taking a walk, which I always find to be a wonderful way to kind of just plant me like, here I am in my body on this earth, having this experience, or whether you are a yogi, you know, doing some yoga, doing some breath, work, sometimes dancing, I love to dance, you know, I love to dance, that's a great way of getting in my body. But so much of where our wisdom in grief lives comes from the body. So I think it starts with honoring that which might be a hard concept for some people because of our tendency to overthink and overanalyze and be like, well, if I'm not thinking about my grief, then I won't have to deal with it. But are you feeling really, really exhausted? for seemingly no good reason? So many people say so exhausted? I don't know, Why could it be that the weight of grief is just Lepik? Break around your shoulders? Are you really cranky, and irritable and short tempered with people? When that's maybe not like you to be that way? Like, are you having trouble eating? Or, you know, sleeping too much or not sleeping enough? Like what are the cues that your body is giving you really sometimes that your life is giving you to like? Are you noticing yourself withdrawing or isolating from certain relationships and connections, all these ways that our grief is trying to get our attention? Are you listening? And then once you listen, once you settle in and like, really allow yourself to say, oh, okay, this is grief. And what can you do to take care of yourself in that moment? And to honor and make space for that?

**Rosanne** 09:10

Okay. I don't know if people truly understand. Listen to your body and do Yeah, because we're not used to that. Right? Right. Especially when it comes with with caregiving. We caregivers, we don't have time to think about how we're feeling in these moments. Yeah. And then grief happens and you're like, Well, I really don't want to talk about this. I really don't want to feel this. And and you just turn in your turn. So then how to keep going. Just keep on going. Yeah. So how do you then sit and listen to your body and say, oh, okay, this is what you're telling me? Yeah. How do you and I hate to ask it in this way, but how do you how do we allow ourselves to grieve?

**Naila** 09:57

Hmm. Yeah, I mean, that The word it's an interesting word choice, right? Allowing.

**Rosanne** 10:03

Right?

**Naila** 10:04

Yeah, what are we allowing and giving ourselves permission to do. And I also want to acknowledge what you've said, because a lot of times, we're so busy in survival mode, that there is no time to stop. Or we have, you know, we have to take care of the kids the house, we have to, like we're doing all these things, and there isn't room to really pause and acknowledge the loss and the sadness and everything else that we're feeling. I think one of the misconceptions that people have, or that I should say, that we have is that if we're going to make space for our grief, it's like we need this big chunk of time, like, today is going to be my grief day, I'm gonna sit in it. And like, I mean, honestly, I do know some people who do that. And I say more power to them. But we don't all have that luxury. Or we think doing our grief work. I say work in quotes means that we have to sit with a therapist or somebody and, you know, I'm all about having support. And that's definitely a valuable component. But what if you just allowed yourself five minutes of quiet with your morning, coffee, what if instead of your usual go to, of turning on the news, you turn on a song that your person loved, or you make something that they loved to eat, or maybe you go out and like they loved these flowers, and you see them so you bring those flowers, and you put them in a vase, and that's sort of a touchstone through your day, every time you walk by those flowers, you stop, and you think of them in some way? Like, what are the ways? So there's the part about dropping into your body? And what am I feeling but there's also ways to like, bring your person into the space, which will also then drop you into your body and what you're feeling because grief lives in the body and our emotions live in the body. And maybe you know, hearing that song makes you ball. But that's good. That's a moment of release. That's a moment of being like, ah, yeah, I really, really miss them. And this is so hard right now. And it's okay. It's okay to give yourself that moment.

**Rosanne** 12:35

Right.

**Naila** 12:35

Yeah.

**Rosanne** 12:36

No matter if it was 10 minutes ago, or 25 years ago?

**Naila** 12:41

Yes. Yeah.

**Rosanne** 12:43

No matter.

**Naila** 12:44

Yeah, absolutely. There is no timeline. And I think one of the hard things about the holidays, is it it does sometimes sort of Sideswipe people who might be on the farther end from their loss, like, oh, my gosh, it's been 20 years. Why am I feeling this way? But that's the nature of grief. It's so unpredictable.

**Rosanne** 13:04

Right? Yeah. And you're allowed?

**Naila** 13:07

Yes, you're allowed.

**Rosanne** 13:09

Because that's the other part of all of this, the thinking that will in blank years, you'll be fine. Or it doesn't matter how long it's been. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. I mean, it just, it's there. It's part of you. It you know, these people were part of your life. Yeah. And I think it's hard when people when others don't understand or when we feel like others don't get it. What do you do in those instances, especially when you're gathering with other people? And if you feel that you're not heard, or you're not, they're not validating you? Or you feel like you're being judged? How do you support yourself in those times.

**Naila** 13:58

And that's so important, the supporting of self, especially for those of us who might be more outward focused and tend to be caring for everybody else. Or if we've been in that caregiving mode. It's like, it becomes so much a part of our identity. Sometimes we don't even know how to step back and be like, Oh, what do I need right now? Yeah, yeah. And so I think it's important. I mean, honestly, if I could just give like one tip about navigating grief over the holidays, which is big, cancel the holidays, if you don't feel like it.

**Rosanne** 14:36

There you go. You're allowed.

**Naila** 14:39

Yeah, you're totally allowed to do that. But if you're going to try to have a holiday season in some way that looks like what it's looked like before. Really be mindful of having like exit clauses and as much as you can He's sort of think about these situations before you go into them. So you're not in them. And then all of a sudden, you're like, stuck, and you can't get out. Like, think about, oh, if I'm going to end

Brenda's Thanksgiving dinner, who are the people who like, get on my nerves? Who are the people who, you know, do always have a smart aleck a comment or like in the past, I've experienced them saying like, Oh, my gosh, shouldn't you be over this by now? Can you somehow avoid or not engage with those people as much as it's possible during that dinner? And also, which might be hard to do? Speak your truth? Because so often, what happens in these interactions is that we constrict, and we curl inward, and it's like, oh, my gosh, well, I guess my grief doesn't matter, or whatever the pain or the anger or whatever it is, we just kind of swallow it. And we feel awful. But we don't say anything. So can you push your edge a little bit, if it makes you uncomfortable and say, you know, this is really incredibly hard for me, it was hard for me to even show up today in what you were saying, or the way that you're behaving right now. Doesn't feel helpful and supportive to me. And you don't have to go into any more like explanation. You know, like, you don't have to sort of engage. So it becomes a dialogue. It's just how can it be enough to just state that? And maybe then say, and if you can't respect that, I'm going to have to leave?

**Rosanne 16:43**

Right? Yeah. No, that's, that's great. Well, and, you know, the flip side of is the, you know, it's just hard for me to come here. Why?

**Naila 16:53**

Yeah. Why? Why? Why do you think?

**Rosanne 16:56**

Yeah, right. Right. Well, I don't know. Let's see. Yeah. Right. But it's Yeah. And that's, and then, and then that's another log on the fire. That's another? Are you kidding me? It's almost like, there are feelings like you're allowed to to have your feelings you're allowed. And if other people don't understand that, that's, that's on them? That's not on you.

**Naila 17:18**

Totally Exactly, exactly. I think one of the most unfair things about being a Griever is that you have to kind of be your own self advocate, because people are not going to know what to say what to do. They're going to bungle the moments around you all the time. And so without us saying, Hey, I'm really struggling with this right now. Or you know, what would be supportive this not this like without us really speaking up for what we need and claiming space for what we need. It's not going to happen otherwise, people aren't going to unless they have been through a loss, as well. And sometimes even you know, we all grieve differently. So sometimes other Grievers are not going to be your best sources report. Right? Yeah. But for the most part, so many people just don't know what to do or say. And it unfortunately falls on us to educate them on top of everything else. Yeah, yeah. On top of everything else, yeah. And to know that at any point where it feels too difficult, or hard, or we're not being heard or validated, I get to leave, I get this person does not need access to my energy to my story to me in this moment. And it doesn't matter if they're the most beloved family member, it doesn't matter if we have the most special relationship. In that moment. If it feels hurtful to you in any way. You're allowed to check out in whatever way feels good to you.

**Rosanne 18:53**

That's great. That's so important. It's so important, because there's there's those expectations. Yes, yeah. And we have to allow ourselves to remove that expectation, whatever it may be. And yeah, because you know, there's a lot of that toxic positivity of, you know, you're not going to make the stuffing, you're not going to make you mean, you're not going to do that. No, no, you know, but then when you don't feel it, when you're having a hard time making it through your day, or when all of these things instead of bringing the joy that it used to bring is now a trigger is now a poke in the eye. Yeah. You're allowed to not poke yourself in the eye. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah.

**Naila** 19:41

Yeah. And how is that really contributing to whatever, you know, whatever peace of mind, whatever, like whatever you're going to create in that moment. Is the stuffing. really essential? Right is going out and cutting down the tree? really essential, like whatever it is that you usually or typically do, maybe stop and think, how is that really going to make me feel? How is that going to impact or not impact this gathering? Would it really matter if it's done differently? Or if it's not there, or whatever it is?

**Rosanne** 20:22

Well, and it's it starts so early, I swear we go from bathing suits to Halloween candy to Christmas trees, I swear.

**Naila** 20:30

It's true, it's true, I mean, in August, I was seeing how in stock in the stores, and I was like, summer is not even over

**Rosanne** 20:38

What's happening. So it's hard to get around it. And I, and I'm already seeing people saying, I'm just, I just want to get through the whole season, I just want to get through it. And that hurts my heart. Because it's, it just doesn't have to be that way.

**Naila** 20:55

It doesn't, it doesn't and that you're right, that weight of expectation that we put on ourselves is what often makes it so much harder, it's already going to be a hard tie. There's like no getting around that. But everything else we expect of ourselves just can make it unbearable. can make it a worse time of year. For us.

**Rosanne** 21:19

Is that just the idea? Is that just the way to go. Just follow follow how you feel, because then you'll have other people that are saying, well, you have to go. Yeah, okay, well, you know, suck it up, and just, you have to show up, or whatever.

**Naila** 21:32

I think it is, I think that's very uncomfortable. For a lot of people, it might seem selfish, it might seem like they're gonna disappoint somebody, or maybe they might regret like missing out on some moment that happens if they're not there. But if you can't center yourself, when you're grieving, when else are you going to center yourself in your life?

**Rosanne** 22:00

Absolutely.

**Naila** 22:01

It's the time that you need yourself the most. And you need what's gonna make you feel resourced and nourished. And you need your compassion and your your own forgiveness and grace, to just show up as you are and if showing up as you are means, well, I need to pull out of this space this year, then that's definitely okay. And people and you know, it's also hard to not be attached, especially if we're talking about other loved ones to their reactions, but you kind of just left to have have people have their reaction, and whatever they need to sit with because of your decision. They're just going to sit with it. And at some point, maybe you come back and you have a conversation around it. But if it doesn't feel good to you, why put yourself through it. I fully fully agree. Yeah, yeah. You know, one of my clients just told me that she and her husband are going away for Thanksgiving this year. And I was like, Yes, I 100% support fat, because they don't want to deal with the family dynamics, and like all the obligation and expectation. And then like, if I'm there, I know, I'm gonna fall into this mode of behavior. And I don't want that for myself. So they're just going to go away and have their own little Thanksgiving, I'm actually a big proponent, if you have the luxury of being able to do so. And I know, it's not like you can leave your grief behind, you're still bringing it with you. It's getting into bed. Yeah. But if you can take yourself out of those situations, like maybe just being in a different environment creates a little more space for you to be with your grief in a way that feels, I don't want to say easier, but in a way that feels like a little gentler to navigate than if you're worrying about all these other dynamics that come into play at the holidays. Now that I'm thinking about it, that's probably really hard for people with kids who are grieving, right? Because you do feel like, oh, I owe my kids some kind of Christmas.

**Rosanne** 24:09

And you do and you I mean, and you do as in the act, not

**Naila** 24:14

Right. Right.

**Rosanne** 24:15

That you do that you but you you figure it out, you make you make your way you make your way.

**Naila** 24:20

And you can make sessions. It doesn't have to be the all out.

**Rosanne** 24:24

Right? And it doesn't have to be just like it's always been

**Naila** 24:26

Right. Right.

**Rosanne** 24:28

And PS you're also teaching them how to grieve

**Naila 24:31**

Exactly. Because if you're going to be like Stepford, we're just going to do everything the way we did and everything is fine. Well, what are you teaching them?

**Naila 24:39**

Yeah.

**Rosanne 24:40**

It's so amazing how, how we fall into that, well, I have to do this and I have to do that and trying to turn that switch off. is hard.

**Naila 24:51**

It is hard.

**Rosanne 24:53**

It's that boundary. It's that holding your boundary. It's that holding this is what's better for me right now and I think also in that it may not be this way forever. But for right now, this is where I am. And I need you to respect where I am. And if you don't, okay, no harm, no foul, I'm still going to do what I need to do for me. And I think that's hard for people to stand up and be able to say that.

**Naila 25:19**

It is, it is especially because like you said, we are such a grief averse culture, and we want people to move on. And we want to be able to give them the thing that's going to fix them, or solve that. And so for so many people who aren't experiencing the grief, and in some families, it could be like the whole family is grieving, but you know, everybody's doing it differently. And maybe for one family member, the way is to like, throw themselves into doing all the Hanukkah things, or whatever it is, yeah. But have, you have to respect that that's not going to be the way that everybody feels. And I think that's also something that surprises people about when you're grieving the loss of a person within a family. It's like, oh, we're not all like feeling this the same. We're not all dealing with this the same way. And like our relationships, we're all very individual. So how we experience our grief is going to be a very individual experience. And, you know, we shouldn't feel guilty, because the way somebody else is expressing their grief looks different than ours.

**Rosanne 26:23**

Yeah, it's it's very hard. It's very hard. And I think that's part of the struggle of having people understand where you are. We have different touchstones we have different points. And that's okay. But that's what adds to that. You know, you're on the clock. What you're still sad. Yeah, it adds to that.

**Naila 26:42**

Yeah, I really think we'd be so much better off if we allowed for the fact that we're all going to do this Grief thing in our own way. And we need to respect that. Yeah,

**Rosanne 26:55**

Absolutely. Yep. Well, now how can we I love I love the the techniques that you have to bring your people to you. And with you. I love that, can you share some of the some of the ways we can do that? Yeah, you know, in anything, and not only around the holidays, but in everyday life, how we can bring our people that were missing with us.

**Naila 27:17**

Yeah, I will say, for me, I will just share with my dad. So my dad died 10 years ago. And one of my ways that I bring him with me is I wear I have some ties that used to belong to him that I will sometimes wear as belts, I have one of his caps, I have a shirt that I often wear on the anniversary of his death. So like wearing something that matter to them that they love to whatever it is jewelry, clothing, whatever is definitely a way to do that. I will also and some people find this a little strange, but it's like, however, however calls to you to be with your person. I will sometimes say if I'm going on a walk, I will literally say Hey, Dad, you want to come on a walk with me. And I feel like our people are waiting for those invitations. It might feel strange at first, you know so often when we lose a loved one, it feels like you're just sitting around waiting for a sign wondering where they are, what do they do it like they feel so far away, you don't feel connected, but they want to be connected. And so whatever feels good to you and feel sort of symbolic of your relationship that you can feel connected to them just because I love going on walks and I just always think of like a jaunty walk that my dad had. That's like a fun way for me to be like, I'm going on a walk you want to come. But maybe it's like, Hey, Mom, I'm gonna make your favorite dish in the kitchen. Tonight. You want to be with me, or I have like played songs and danced with my dad around my living room. There's so many ways I like what instinctively feels good to you to do and honor that. And it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks. And you don't even have to share it. If you feel awkward and uncomfortable. It can be like your own private ritual. You know, one anniversary, I actually set the table like I was inviting my dad to dinner and I poured him a glass of wine and I sat and I had a candle and I did the whole thing and I do I do sense a presence in those moments and I feel like that draws him closer to me and creates more space for him to be with me not just in that moment but as I go through my days, but if you're looking for like other simple things to do, if nothing's really striking you you know just light a candle and place it near a photo or near some memento that you had of theirs and that can kind of be your little space where you go and you sit to feel them in the air or light a candle and write a letter to them as you're sitting with the candle, maybe drink, drink, where they a wine drinker drink a glass of their favorite wine or whatever tea they loved, or if they loved coffee, like you can do that. I think of my grandmother always used to say, Pip pip, cheerio. And sometimes, you know, like, what are the expressions that your loved one says? How can you actively bring that into conversations like baby? Do you want to send that in an email? Does that suddenly become your email tagline for the week? Or is it something you're sharing in a text message with people cooking their favorite foods, like I said, like, that's a great way or watching a movie that they liked or listening to music that they liked, I often encourage creating entire playlists of either their favorite songs or songs that you loved together, like maybe you want to a concert, this one artists together. And so you have this whole playlist that you can turn to to remember that night. There's so many little creative things that we can do. I also love the idea of just choosing to embody one of their qualities, whatever that is, like, Was it their kindness? Was it their sense of humor? Was it their willingness to help, like, whatever it was that either you really loved and appreciated, or people used to comment on all the time? Like, how can you sort of call back for more in your own life, and maybe you do that by like, sitting down and

jotting down a whole list, and maybe like, my dad was my mom was my sister it like, whatever it is, and then just looking at and be like, you know, this week, I think I'm gonna embody this. And next week, it might be this or maybe you do it for 40 days, like whatever it is, just to kind of be carrying them with you and keeping them close. And storytelling is one of I think, the greatest ways to really, really keep your person close to you. So you know, if it is the holidays, do you want to organize whether it's on Zoom, or when you're actually in the space, like, invite everybody to share a story or a month, you know, a memory or a funny moment, that person and like really lead into that, like, notice how the energy in the room changes when you start like saying their name, talking about this made them laugh, or like, remember that ridiculous thing they used to say, or like how they got into trouble when they did this. Like there is something I think almost electric that happens when we start talking about our people. And we can remember that, oh, in some way. They're still here. In some way. They're still here in this memory that I have, or in this recollection of what their laughter sounds like, are this thing that I used to say they're not gone?

**Rosanne 33:03**

Yeah. That's beautiful. That's absolutely beautiful. And the postscript to that is and if emotion comes from that, that's okay.

**Naila 33:14**

Yeah.

**Rosanne 33:14**

Let it come. Let it, let it, let it whatever comes forth. Let it come forth.

**Naila 33:19**

Yeah. Yeah. And what if you know, think of that emotion as an honoring?

**Rosanne 33:25**

Right.

**Naila 33:25**

Instead of like, Oh, my God, something's wrong with me. Why am I crying right now? Well, this is how I'm honoring my longing. My missing my love. Like, this is how my grief wants to be expressed in this moment, and it's okay.

**Rosanne 33:39**

Yeah. Yeah, that's beautiful. I love that.

**Naila 33:42**

And I mean, it's okay, if you are actually having a good time. It is Oh, Kay. Don't beat yourself up. That that somehow means that you're not missing your person or honoring their memory, you are allowed to have moments of joy and peace and pleasure.

**Rosanne 34:00**

Yes. It's not disrespectful. It's not anything. It doesn't mean you don't miss them anymore. It doesn't mean you've moved on and there. It's okay. It's permission. What about the people that say, I'll never be happy again? I'll never celebrate anything again, because my person isn't here. What? What can you say to that?

**Naila 34:22**

Yeah, you know, I don't like to sort of pull people away from what feels like a truth for them.

**Rosanne 34:32**

Sure. Of course.

**Naila 34:33**

So yeah. So I want to honor that they feel that way. And also, invite the reflection like, if you look back on your day, yesterday, can you tell me a moment where you felt happy? It doesn't have to be like you were belly laughing or like oh my gosh, like you felt this like giant burst of joy, but like, was there a simple moment, maybe you just like heard a bird singing and that brought a smile to your face, maybe your grandchild walked into the room and like you were so excited to see him like, we do have these moments of happiness. But I think because we're so immersed in our grief and our wanting that person to still be here, it's hard to see them for what they are and to let them in. So it may feel like you'll never be happy again. But happiness will come to you and is all around you and available. I agree. There's so many things, I feel like we say sometimes to ourselves, sometimes that come at us that make us feel like oh my gosh, like, am I ever going to make it through this? And the truth is, no, you're never going to get over this loss. If you're looking for that to be the fix. I'm sorry. That's just not the way it works. So how can you learn to be more intentional about being in relationship with your grief, it's really a relationship. It's like something that you have to cultivate, so that it becomes a part of you. But it doesn't always have to overwhelm you.

**Rosanne 36:33**

Right. Right. And yeah. And it's funny, I think about that I think about like, okay, it's almost like, well, when am I going to feel like myself again? Well, I think yourself there was a piece of, and I can speak for myself, there was a piece of myself that left with my mother. I'm not going to get that piece back.

**Naila 36:55**

Yeah.

**Rosanne 36:56**

But I need to move forward. Because this is this is how life is right? And in what you just said, it's that, how do we do that? How do we find a way to live with this grief? That we you know, come on Have a seat. Let's talk.

**Naila 37:16**

Yeah, yeah.

**Rosanne 37:17**

How do we do that?

**Naila 37:19**

Yeah. And I think in the beginning of our conversation, you said something about like grief rearranging?

**Rosanne 37:26**

Yeah. rearranges your life?

**Naila 37:27**

Yeah. And that is like that rearrangement. There are pieces that leave, there are pieces that stay there are pieces that come and go like it's such a fluid journey. Yeah, that's just on going. And one of the invitations, I think that's always present is what really matters to me now, how do I want to live my life in a way that truly matters to me. And so that piece of you that left with your mom, like, not that you're going to find a piece that's ever going to replace that. But maybe there is something that comes in, that somehow comes in because you're looking to be more authentic? You because you're looking to live in a way that really honors your mom's legacy? Because you want to be true to yourself and your own grief process?

**Rosanne 38:23**

Yeah, I love that. Yeah. It's true. It's true. And it comes down to I feel like it comes down to us honoring ourselves, along with everything else that we do. Yeah, like giving ourselves that opportunity to be us.

**Naila 38:44**

Yes, to be us, to be us. And the US that's like constantly being rearranged and scrambled and growing and stumbling backwards and doing all the things that us like, how can we really just inhabit our own humanity in this moment, and trust that, like, Grief is a part of that grief is a very natural human experience. And so it's going to come to us all at some point or another if we haven't already experienced it. So we need to kind of be friend and not push it away.

**Rosanne 39:24**

Yup. Agreed. Now, I've been invited to this, whatever, I'm going to this whatever, what's my plan? How do I get myself there? How do I get myself out? What are my steps? A cheat sheet.

**Naila 39:35**

I think she Yeah, I think what's really important is if you are going to commit to something that you let the host know ahead of time. Hey, I am saying yes in that in this moment, because I feel like I can but I really need you to know that on the day of I might change my mind. And I might be Be a last minute no show. And if that's not okay, then I'm just gonna back out now. And I also need you to know that I might come in, I might only be able to stay for five or 10 minutes. Because once I get there, maybe I'm realized this is not a good idea, or I don't have energy for this or whatever it is. So you kind of build in that flexibility and that escape route for yourself before you even get there. So you don't get burdened by the obligation of like, Ah, now I'm here, I guess I have to stay the whole two hours and suffer through this experience that's gonna be draining for you.

**Rosanne 40:38**

Right? Yeah, throw you into a tizzy for the days afterwards. Yes.

**Naila 40:42**

Yeah And you know, if there's somebody in your life, a good friend and other family member, like somebody who feels like they really get where you are in this, and they're a support person, and you can bring them, bring them along with you. So that if you are having a moment, that's really challenging, instead of going in hiding in the bathroom, or the balcony, or whatever it is, you can turn to that person and say, Oh, my gosh, this is really coming up for me right now and know that you have that safe space there to express yourself. Okay. I love that. Yeah, it's it's so important to feel like we have some kind of support in those situations,

**Naila 41:21**

Because it's hard. And you don't know. And you don't know what's gonna hit you. You don't know if it's a smell. You don't know it.

**Naila 41:27**

Yes, that's so true.

**Rosanne 41:28**

Anything.

**Naila 41:29**

Yeah, those grief bursts that come from just like any little note of music, like an image, like something somebody says, you know, you don't know where those are going to come from. So it's important to have some way to take care of yourself and not get stuck. Yeah, you know, the holiday dinner party, that becomes a nightmare. All of a sudden.

**Rosanne 41:50**

Totally. And you're allowed. You're allowed have some grace for yourself. Have some compassion for yourself.

**Naila 41:57**

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Grace is so important. It really does stir up a lot. It's, it does vary, as I often say, Griefy time of year.

**Rosanne 42:09**

It is a griefy time, well, and we put such we put such emphasis on things. And like, if we don't have this thing in this spot at this time, Everything's ruined. Yeah. And it's like, what is that?

**Naila 42:26**

I don't know what that is. I think that tradition is so ingrained in us, but you have permission to create new traditions to do away with the old ones to like, scale back like you did with your Christmas tree. I mean, maybe you put up a tree and you hang only one ornament. Or maybe instead of a tree, you get a

wreath, or you know, you light a candle instead of like turning your house into the Griswolds house, like whatever it is, you just how can you make this manageable for yourself?

**Rosanne** 43:01

Right? Absolutely. You've so many articles and poems, and just an essays. Everything that you do, I feel like is a hug. Thank you for saying, Oh, really, truly a hug. And it's like, I read them. And I'm like, yeah, yeah, not. I don't know how you got into my brain. But you did. And yeah, so I don't know if you have anything that you would want to share with our listeners about the holidays about grief about anything that you would like to leave them with.

**Naila** 43:41

So this came to me last year, probably because I was thinking so much on all the things that we were talking about today. And it felt important to put out around the holidays. And I've since amended it to be awake available for grief in general. But it was really written for the holidays when I first wrote it, so I'm just going to offer it please. Grievors Holiday Declaration. I give myself permission to show up as I am moment to moment, this holiday season. I allow myself to feel what I feel, no matter how long it's been, or what society culture or others tell me about how or what I should be feeling. I release myself from performative roles and behaviors that dis honor my truth. I extend myself grace and compassion in the myriad manifestations and expressions of my grief knowing there is no right or wrong way to grieve. I let go of it. expectations shoulds and thoughts of what the holidays are supposed to be, and focus on what aligns with the support, space, comfort and nurturing that I desire. I scaled back, forego, reimagine, or create new traditions based on what I have capacity for mentally, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. I limit my obligations and commitments, honoring my energetic boundaries. I recognize my rights to say no, to say yes, and then change my mind at any point, including the last minute to leave any event at any time or come prepared with an exit plan, and to remove myself from situations conversations and people that are triggering dismissive, or otherwise invalidating of my grief. I make time to take care of myself, and my grief, with rest, hydration, nourishing foods, movement, time in nature, loving, non demanding companionship, and whatever else I find soothing, and healing. I make time to be with my person or people through songs, movies, meals and activities. They love, story and memory sharing rituals that honor our relationship, creative practices, choices that embody what I most loved about them. Anything that makes me feel closer to them. And I affirm that my grief matters, whether I am grieving a death, or another loss or life change transition interruption that has up ended my world and altered my sense of self. I reach out to help when needed to those who can hold safe and compassionate space for me. I celebrate and acknowledge the small steps and moments that prioritize my well being peace of mind and growing awareness of what I deserve as I agree. And I embrace moments of ease, joy, wonder and pleasure allowing them as part of the full spectrum experience. That is grief. I know that was a lot. But it seemed to cover so much of what people were struggling with and asking me about and some of what I've experienced myself in my own grief journey.

**Rosanne** 47:53

It's beautiful. And it did. It covers everything. It really does. And I appreciate that. And I appreciate you.

48:00

And I appreciate you this. I love this conversation so much. For more

**Rosanne** 48:05

information about Naila. Her writing, including the Grievors Holiday Declaration, the services she provides, and her grief groups. You can find her at [ThisHallowedWilderness.com](http://ThisHallowedWilderness.com) or Salt Trails Philly. I hope you enjoyed our podcast today, head over to [Daughterhood.org](http://Daughterhood.org) and click on the podcast section for Show Notes including the full transcript and links to any resources and information from today's episode. You can find and review us on Apple podcasts or anywhere you listen to your podcasts. We are also on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, at Daughterhood The Podcast and on my blog [HeyRoe.com](http://HeyRoe.com). Feel free to leave me a message and let me know what issues you may be facing and we'd like to hear more about or even if you just want to say hi, I'd love to hear from you. Also a very special thank you to Susan Rowe for our theme music, the instrumental version of her beautiful song *mamas eyes* from her album *lessons in love*. I hope you found what you were looking for today, information, inspiration or even just a little company. This is Rosanne Corcoran. I hope you'll join me next time in Daughterhood.