

Issue of coping with death in "the love of my life" and "i bought a bed"

[Life](#), [Love](#)



The essays "The Love of My Life" by Cheryl Strayed and "I bought a Bed" by Donald Antrim discussed the issue of coping with death, wherein the authors shared their own experiences of experiencing and coping with grief due to the deaths of their mothers. Interestingly, both Strayed and Antrim's essays share similarities and differences in the way they experienced, coped, and came to terms with death and grief.

The discussion and analysis contained herein posits that Strayed and Antrim both experienced and coped with death through physical comfort and gratification—Strayed by having extramarital affairs with strangers, and Antrim by searching for the 'perfect' bed. However, they also differed in their eventual understanding of death and grief, for it became apparent that her experience of grief made Strayed accept grief for what it is: grief with irreversible consequences. Antrim, meanwhile, ended his essay still unable to determine and acknowledge the grief he was experiencing.

Strayed and Antrim's similarity was their subsistence to physical comforts and gratification when they experienced the deaths of their mothers. The following passage from Strayed's essay identified this important transition in her life, wherein denial and confusion has set in her life upon the death of her mother (292-3): It was only a kiss, and barely that, but it was anyway, a crossing...the end of one thing, the beginning of another: my life as a slut.... we are told specifically...the famous five stages of grief...: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.

I was alarmed by how many people knew them, how deeply this single definition of the grieving process had permeated our cultural consciousness.

Strayed, in this passage, implicitly expressed her rebellion against the 'culturally acceptable' mechanism of society when it comes to coping with grief. The fact that she did not experience nor feel these 'five stages of grief' reflected the confused, incomprehensible state she found herself in: she found gratification and comfort by having sex with strangers, and did not enjoy anymore sharing intimacy with her husband.

Strayed indirectly projected her grief towards her own life—specifically Mark, her husband—in order to accept the death of her mother. Similarly, Antrim felt the same 'craving' for physical comfort and gratification as Strayed; however, he differed from Strayed in that he directed his grief towards finding the best bed to buy. It is in his conquest of the 'perfect bed' that Antrim realized how he did not want to experience comfort at all, a 'punishment' that he unconsciously inflicted upon himself in order to experience the death of his mother. Surprisingly, however, Antrim's feelings of grief were more complex and less explicit than Strayed.

Nowhere in the essay that he addressed what had he really felt towards his mother; rather, he projected his feelings of grief and changed it to material consumption—but buying the Dux bed. The author expressed his apprehension of experiencing comfort after his mother's death. While Strayed felt an absence of grief in her life and did not feel it immediately, Antrim wanted the converse of what Strayed had wanted. He wanted to feel grief, whether it came to him already or not. He prepared for this grief by denying himself the bed he so badly wanted to have and experience: "The bed was alive.

It was alive with my mother. I sank into the bed, and it was as if I were sinking down into her arms" (34). At the end of the essay, readers will realize that Antrim was not yet prepared to go through the process of grief, and the essay's ending marked the significant beginning of his transition from denial to finally accepting grief. This process, which Strayed refused to accept until the end of her essay and grief, worked differently for the authors, but achieved similar results: grief conquered their lives and irreversibly changed their lives in ways they did not anticipate to happen.