

CATCH FEELS: Grief

[00:00:00] **Wingshan:** Catch Feels is a five-part podcast made by 15 25 Collective from Nottingham Contemporary in collaboration with artist Meera Shakti Osborne and DJ producer AG. It sits alongside a wider project and touring exhibition entitled "Making Histories," where different groups around the UK explore a single emotion in each session by sharing sounds, experimenting in textiles and simply talking about it together. This project is funded by Arts Council England and Garfield Weston Foundation. Our opening introduction music is called "Wholesome" by Kevin McCleod. Episode One: Grief. Content warning: features discussion on death, grief, COVID-19, gender identity and mental health. If you are affected by any of the topics explored in this podcast, please see our linked website for resources.

[00:01:49] **Meera:** What does grief feel like in your body? Does it move around. And is there a rhythm to your grief?

[00:02:00] **Young Person 1:** I feel like for me, grief normally feels like a push and a pull kind of situation, especially with the things that I grieve. I tend to agree with like myself in the past. And obviously to do that, you have to sort of go back into yourself, push back out, and then sort of see it through my grown perspective, go back - it feels scattered, but also it's a constant push and pull, but it's very erratic at the same time, I think.

[00:02:26] **Young Person 2:** For me it feels quite heavy and kind of stuck in one place, but at the same time, it just makes my mind go a bit crazy and like kind of everywhere... It's a bit of both - kind of two extremes, very static and heavy, but also a bit crazy.

[00:02:44] **Young Person 3:** I'd compare it to a heartbeat or something - like a pulsating thing? And I find the idea of grieving your past self the most interesting cause I have all of the videos of my childhood on my computer and that's what I was looking at to find the sound that I didn't end up sending cause it didn't work, but that's sort of the route that I would be interested in - grieving your youth.

[00:03:07] **grief soundtrack:** This is how the long political process of Brexit came to an end.

[00:03:17] European politicians joining hands, singing, sometimes crying minutes after they had reluctantly backed the withdrawal agreement, backing a Brexit that most of these MEPs didn't want.

[00:03:31] It's in fact sad to see a country leaving that twice liberated us.

[00:03:39] **Young Person 4:** I don't know what grief means, for English speaking people, because I speak Spanish. I translated it because I figured out the word, but I don't actually know the translation and there wasn't a word that... I mean, we have a word for grieving, but I don't know if it means the same, so I dunno, what is this about? I don't really understand what grieving is. Yeah, that's my problem, I guess.

[00:04:08] **Meera:** It's interesting, I think, like how... Because English isn't your first language, you bring up this thing, which is actually... Like grief is so personal that I feel like each of us would define it a bit differently.

[00:04:23] And I guess that's kind of what this conversation is about. There isn't a one answer to that. I think it's a great question, cause I think establishing what it means to you and then communicating it is a whole journey.

[00:04:37] **Young Person 4:** Hmm. Okay. Yeah. I mean, according to what I've read that is what it means. I think I haven't experienced it a lot and... I don't know if it's because something happened to you, you feel sad or if someone died. So I'm just... I'm realizing that I haven't had a lot of... I mean, I've had bad experiences in my life, but I haven't taken them to that level. So that made me question how I don't like to feel sad and things like that. So I have a problem with that and that's why I don't feel connected to the grieving topic, I guess, because it's not a feeling that I enjoy and I try to avoid crying or feeling sad and all of those things.

[00:05:25] **Young Person 1:** I feel that. When you was talking about not wanting to feel sad, I definitely feel like that's... the most painful part of grieving is the fact that you have to accept this thing happens to me. Let's move on from it. And that stops a lot of people from grieving. And I swear it's one of the five stages of grief, isn't it? And it comes quite... it's not the immediate... I think it's almost like... What is it? I don't know the five stages of grief but I know... denial comes later. And I feel that as well. Normally, the things I'm grieving as an adult happened decades ago and it's now sort of coming up to okay, you're gonna have to be sad for this and that's kind of like... no, I don't want to do it, but ultimately it, it helps, doesn't it?

[00:06:06] **Meera:** For me, there's definitely a slight jittery feeling in my body with grief. I think... I've grieved people and I've grieved past things that have happened or whatever and I think both have a similar thing that it's almost like something slipped away and you can't do anything about it... and then there's like a jittery feeling with that, but then there's also a feeling of acceptance that comes inevitable.

[00:06:35] **Young Person 3:** I feel like it's frustrating cause it's just like such an intense loss of power. You know what I mean? Like there's nothing you can really do to take that power back, so it's not something I personally experienced, but I know that a lot of people kind of combat that by trying to regain power in other ways, like... things that you can control, like eating and, you know, activity and things like that.

[00:06:57] I suppose that would be quite frustrating to just suddenly have all that loss of power, you know what I mean?

[00:07:04] **Young Person 5:** Yeah, it's been sometimes too overwhelming. You just lose control over it. All you have to do is just wait for time to heal yourself and to just get on with it. And it's just weird about grief, how I feel sometimes. There's emptiness in me and I don't... I feel like there's something's missing, but I'm still functioning normally. Or sometimes depending on the situation, I just feel there's a sense of anger for no reason.

[00:07:34] **Young Person 3:** And also surprised that the world carries on, you know what I mean? There's that song that's a bit cheesy. I can't remember what it's called. The lyrics or something like why does the sun keep shining? Don't they know it's the end of the world or something like that. Like where you feel like your world has just completely been turned over, but nobody else seems to recognize it.

[00:07:57] **Young Person 1:** I think in that case, you kind of feel like an air of neglect... Obviously you've gone through this situation and it's such a deep thing. You'd think - Oh, the world would stop for me and then you realize that it doesn't and it's like - Oh... it's really isolating. Like, Oh, I'm alone in this situation... like I'm grieving not on my own, but it's sort of like, no one can help you grieve, basically. No matter how much support you have, essentially you are alone, and that's an isolating feeling, especially in this time as well, because I think we have time to slow down and think about stuff and it's like... then I can't even see my friends to distract me either.

[00:08:27] **AG:** I think with everything that's going on with the pandemic, I feel like this has been the easiest time for me to process grief, and for me to process conflict and everything, because there's that sense of... this is going on for so many people, so it kind of removes that personal... oh my gosh, this is just happening to me, kind of thing. That's been weird that ever since the pandemic started, I felt like people understood me a bit more, which is really sad to say.

[00:08:57] **Meera:** I guess the moment where in the UK right now there's the obvious grief of just the amount of people that are dying every day. I totally hear you Tkya with this feeling of aloneness, but I wonder also - what does collective grief look like? Are we able to feel stuff together? Does it make it worse? I feel like in other countries where there's more religion or more spirituality, it's easier to have a feeling of connectedness food grief, because there's more traditions around it. And I feel like in the UK, it's harder to connect in some ways.

[00:09:34] **Young Person 3:** Yeah, and I feel like I know that this is a thing typical to America, mainly... more than it is in England, but I feel like even here we've got quite like an individualistic culture and a society, I suppose. So I guess the one thing that has sort of united us is everyone being in lockdown, which is ironic cause obviously we're all alone, but it's like you said, where everyone's sort of going through the same experience, so you kind of feel that other people do understand. Because none of us know each other that well, but the fact that we can come on here and talk about our experiences and have a similar sense of feeling alone and feeling tired and stuff like that - everyone's sort of having the same emotions and it just gives you this opportunity to connect with people more, I guess.

[00:10:16] **Wingshan:** At the beginning of first lockdown, I was reading an article talking about what the weirdness that we were feeling at the very start of the pandemic was a collective grief. In the same way, but a very confusing one in a way that we know we've lost something, but we don't know what it is and that society will never quite go back to the same way. And so that's something that we're grieving, but it's difficult because we don't know what's next. But I think that does feel similar to how grief is. And I think what's interesting, they compared it to 9/11.

[00:10:56] So when 9/11 happened, the airport and going abroad, going on a plane, wasn't the same again. I mean, I, I don't know if... probably many of you don't remember. I mean, I don't remember ever going abroad or anything or going on a plane before 9/11, but for people who do that changed, that feeling of safety as before, you know, you go to the airport, it was super safe. I mean, have you seen home alone two? He just walks onto a plane. And that is something that, you know, you know, something's going to change, you know, society's not going to be the same again, but what's it going to be? And what have we lost? And that's really scary.

[00:11:35] **Meera:** Such an interesting point. Obviously 9/11 had such huge impacts on everything. And the other day I was watching East is East. Which was made before... I don't know if... do you guys know East? It was a show like a film for TV made, I think in 1999 and it's set in the North of England. And it's about a mixed Asian Muslim family and white mixed parents. And that was made before 9/11. And it was just so different because of that - the way in which obviously there was racism, but the Islamophobia just looked completely different. And I wonder now, like, we'll have that with pre COVID and post COVID things where we'll watch something and it will feel weird because it won't be of the world we now know.

[00:12:20] **Young Person 1:** Yeah, I feel that. Even looking on Snapchat memories from a year ago, seeing everyone without masks, it gives you like that kind of... it gives you fear, even though obviously the memories pass and you're not in that space, you're like, I was there... it's that kind of shock and just, I'm not going to have this again kind of situation. It's like, Oh... sucks a little bit.

[00:12:41] But also, I think there's an element of lost identity over this time. I don't know if there's other people have had this experience, but like, I look at even just like pictures of myself or I think about my personality and stuff, but pre COVID and I just feel very different now. And I think it kind of just like speed runs. I don't know if this is more the case for me as a teenager, more than it would be like an adult, but I feel like it kind of speed runs a lot of your identity because you're not having to like, perform anything for anyone else.

[00:13:09] Especially when it comes to like gender and stuff like that, everything feels like you don't really have to fit into this role anymore. And like, I dunno, just from stuff I've seen on Tik Tok mainly honestly, I have seen that that's been quite a collective experience of moving away from past self and then as much as you feel happy that you've developed, there is a kind of grief for who you used to be, I guess? I don't know if other people feel like that but that's how I feel.

[00:13:33] I feel that. I kind of grieve for my future self, because I came out as non-binary during the lockdown. Obviously prior to that, I was a young cis teenager. And obviously I know with how I present and stuff. I'm not going to get the same treatment that I used to miss those old gender roles and the privilege, and I just know it's not going to be the same for me. Obviously. I'm not feeling it now because I can wear a crop top and wear beads in my hair now, but when life gets to kick in again, it's going to be interesting.

[00:14:05] **Young Person 3:** I feel exactly the same thing. I think anyone who's like... like now uses they/them pronouns, like post locked down... that's basically what I was referring to, having a total change in how you see yourself, because you haven't had to perform these roles and it makes so much sense now, but it's just taken COVID to understand that, and I think a lot of people have had that experience, which is a really lovely thing, but it's just kind of scary, I suppose.

[00:14:29] **AG:** I wanted to say about it is lovely, but I'm trying to be really careful with talking about the joys of the pandemic, because so many people have lost loved ones and stuff like that, but I just feel like for me personally, this is the longest I've ever had the chance to sit down since I was like 10. This is the longest I've not had the pressures of having to work, having to perform, having to be outside, having to communicate with all of that stuff. This is the longest I've ever had a break from it. It's been priceless, the amount of stuff that I've got to process and work through, I don't think I would've ever had this opportunity if we wasn't forced to stay at home.

[00:15:10] **Wingshan:** There's also something so empowering, I think, about that - about saying goodbye to who you were and, you know, understanding that growth. I mean the death card in tarot is - AG just put rebirth. The death card in tarot is actually one of the most positive cards you can get someone say because it means release. It means let go and, you know, rebirth and changing and, you know, becoming something new. So it's just good to keep that in mind.

[00:16:07] **Young Person 4:** Well, talking more about grief I'm trying to relate it to my daily life and myself and things like that. I just think about, for example, grieving and well, my grandma died on December, like on Christmas. And I, yeah, I took care of her for like a year, two years because she was ill. She had Alzheimer's. And I wasn't really sad when she died cause it was like a relief cause she was so ill. So it's just like sometimes grief, I think it can be a relief for someone if they are suffering or something. So I think it's sad that she's gone, but on the other hand it just makes me think about how you have to appreciate everyone you know, and getting to know them better.

[00:16:55] So I think because it's such a strong feeling, it just makes you think about your life and who you are and how you're acting with everyone else. It's sad and I don't like to talk about feelings and stuff, because they like to avoid those things, but it's good to have that moment with yourself and your feelings. Just analyze yourself. It's a very sad but good feeling at the same time, cause it makes you change for good, in my experience at least.

[00:17:26] **Young Person 1:** I feel that. I feel like grief sometimes feels very divisive because obviously it's like, Oh, it's such an internalized, localized pain. Especially when you, you lose someone, like I lost my grandma in October of last year because of COVID. And obviously you tend to focus on the loss of it... Obviously yes, you don't have your grandma there anymore, but the love that she had for you is still there and it teaches you how to see that in other people and how to reinterpret your own relationships and sort of embody those. I feel like I'm definitely like my grandma in terms of... I just feel more loving because of her.

[00:18:02] She taught me to be nice and I always have her with me, whereas before I always had my grandma to do that for me, obviously since I don't have it now I have to invite that for myself. You know what I mean? It's kind of like, I understood her more now than I did in life, which is quite strange, but also comforting because I know I always have it with me.

[00:18:25] **Young Person 2:** I think kind of similar to what you spoke about before with the collective idea of grief and healing. I think there's kind of comfort in that as well. If people have died in my family, that's brought people closer together as well. And they relate to I guess the feelings of grief with it. And although it's not like a nice time to see people or kind of connect with people in that situation, but it still brings people closer together.

[00:18:50] **Meera:** My mom's uncle died last week, and we had like a zoom prarthana session. Like everyone was singing together on zoom and there was like, I've got a big family, it was like 80 cameras. And grief brought everyone together in a way that I don't think anything else would have.

[00:19:07] **Young Person 2:** Yeah that's almost the exact same with my family. So my family is massive as well. And literally they'll just put a zoom link or something and everyone kind of sings the prayer songs and it's actually quite... so my grandparents will sing as well. And it's very sad to watch as well, but so nice to see everyone come together and especially with zoom, it's kind of easy for literally people around the world... Anyone who wants to listen and share their respects.

[00:19:38] In a way Corona virus has really helped with international funerals and grieving processes because before you just wouldn't go. And now there's all these different ways to attend things. It's the same as in if it's in India or if it's in London - you attend it the same way.

[00:20:32] **Young Person 4:** I also remember this song because I'm actually doing a sculpture on this song. And I realized the name is well, it's in Spanish, but it's like pains or griefs. So I thought I could play the intro for you on my phone. But yeah, it's this one. I don't know if you can hear it.

[00:20:55] And then it's just the same, but he starts singing two phrases that say You should pain my pain because I've been born with pain and understand me, something like that. And it's very short, but it's very beautiful, and just telling to this person that they should teach them to be happy because they don't know how to be happy because they've been born with it. So, it's like happy song, but then the lyrics are very sad. So I think, yeah, some stuff what grief is to me.