

Pablo Picasso, *Family of Saltimbanques*, 1905



****First Question First****

What is *your* immediate reaction to this artwork?

Trust it. Write about it. Use the guide sheet for help.

Continue reading for another perspective and journal questions.

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Death constructs a community of mourners. It may be a very loose association of friends or a tightly knit family, (or vice versa). But even within this group we may find ourselves feeling alone in our heartbreak. Our devastation can ignore the truth, that many others are hurting too. Their pain may just look different to ours, even unrecognizable. It is tempting to assign meaning to behavior we do not understand. In our own grief we can mistakenly assume, for example: (1) "they aren't crying at all" equals "they must not miss him"; (2) "they keep so busy" equals "they must be in denial"; (3) "all they do is sleep" equals "they're just giving up"; (4) "they won't talk about her" equals "they've forgotten her already."

These assumptions and others like them hurt all who are grieving. And they may set up, in effect, a competition of pain. Each of us comes to grief in the manner in which we've lived, in our fully formed personalities, the tilt of our minds, the delineation of our emotions. And, even with all this, each of us has never maneuvered this particular landscape. Each death is unique. So, we all do share this in common: we loved this person and now they are dead. What do we do with this pain?

Q.) Going on the assumption that every heart is wounded can change our internal ranting. Is there a relationship you've been struggling with that might benefit from some compassion? Write about their behavior, your assumptions as to its meaning, and the underlying pain shared by you both over the death of your loved one.