



2026 INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

SPEAKER

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TITLE & ORGANIZATION

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TOPIC

Living With Migraine Through Times of Grief & Loss

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Grief and migraine are both neurobiological survival mechanisms that signal danger to the brain, making their combined impact physiologically exhausting.
- The "migraine brain" thrives on routine; disruptions in sleep, eating, and activity during grief are drivers of increased attack frequency.
- Vulnerability to migraine increases not only when stress is rising but also when stress hormones (like cortisol) drop rapidly after a stressful event.
- Effective coping involves moving without guilt between "loss-oriented" activities (feeling the pain) and "restoration-oriented" activities (managing life tasks).
- Self-advocacy involves giving yourself permission to leave events early or seek privacy to manage symptoms without self-judgment.

KEY TREATMENTS

- Counseling/therapy
- Eating regularly
- Hobbies
- Hydration
- Journaling
- Movement
- Self-care
- Sleep routine
- Support groups

NOTABLE QUOTES

"When you're navigating bereavement with migraine, you're laying two difficult things on top of each other."

"Your grief, the way it is, is exactly the way it should be for you There's no right way to get through this moment."

PRACTICAL STEPS

- Re-establish routine: Aim for consistent sleep and wake times, even when grieving, to help stabilize the nervous system.
- Prepare a "go kit": Pack hydration, medication, and comfort items when attending services or other events, and scout for a quiet time-out spot or exit location in advance.
- Select your circle: Focus on interacting with people who are understanding and accepting of your explicitly stated needs for privacy.
- Use relaxation tools: Consider guided imagery or relaxation exercises to help lower heightened sympathetic nervous system activity.
- Consult an expert: If experiencing loss of interest in things that used to make you happy, or an inability to function after several months, contact a primary care provider or psychologist, and seek a referral to a grief support specialist.