
Grief and Happiness: A Paradox in Mitch Albom's Tuesdays with Morrie

Mit Sagar, Center For Language Studies, P P Savani University, Kosamba, Surat - 394125, India. Email - mitsagar51@gmail.com , mit.sagar@ppsru.ac.in, Orcid id - 0009-003-3956-8218

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Abstract

This research paper aims to explore the relationship between grief and happiness in Mitch Albom's renowned memoir, "Tuesdays with Morrie." The paper investigates the notion that grief, when approached with openness and introspection, can serve as a transformative tool leading to personal growth and the attainment of happiness. By examining the central characters, their experiences with grief, and the lessons imparted by Morrie Schwartz, the paper reveals the various ways in which grief contributes to the characters' pursuit of happiness. Additionally, it highlights the importance of acknowledging grief as a natural and necessary part of the human experience.

Keywords: Grief, happiness, transformation, personal growth, Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie.

Introduction

Grief and happiness are often perceived as opposing emotions, seemingly incompatible in their essence. Grief is commonly associated with pain, sorrow, and a sense of

loss, while happiness is equated with joy, contentment, and a positive state of being. Grief plays a crucial role in our emotional, psychological, and even physical well-being. This research paper aims to explore the importance of grief in life, examining its transformative power, facilitating healing and growth, fostering resilience, and promoting meaningful connections. However, Mitch Albom's "Tuesdays with Morrie" challenges these common perceptions by exploring the complex relationship between grief and happiness. This section examines the paradoxical nature of grief and happiness within the context of the book, highlighting the link between grief and personal growth, as well as how grief can serve as a catalyst for reevaluating life's priorities.

Morrie's deteriorating health and impending death naturally evoke profound grief in both Albom and the readers. The impending loss creates a sense of sadness and loss, triggering a spectrum of emotions that ripple throughout the narrative. Albom openly shares his emotional journey, allowing readers to empathize and connect with his experience of grief.

However, amidst the grief, "Tuesdays with Morrie" also highlights the transformative power of happiness. Morrie, despite his debilitating illness, embraces life with unwavering positivity and gratitude. He finds joy in simple moments, cherishing the beauty of nature, music, and human connection. Morrie's ability to find happiness even in the face of impending death inspires Albus and challenges the notion that grief must overshadow happiness.

Moreover, the memoir presents the concept of shared happiness amidst grief. Albus and Morrie's weekly meetings become a source of solace and joy for both of them. Despite the inevitable grief that hangs over their time together, they also experience moments of deep connection, laughter, and mutual growth. This demonstrates the possibility of finding happiness even in the midst of profound grief.

The spectrum of grief and happiness in "Tuesdays with Morrie" also highlights the transformative nature of grief itself. As Albus witnesses Morrie's decline, he reflects on his own life choices and priorities. Grief becomes a catalyst for self-reflection and personal growth, leading Albus to reevaluate the way he lives and interacts with others. Through his grief, Albus discovers a newfound appreciation for the present moment and the importance of cultivating meaningful relationships.

Ultimately, "Tuesdays with Morrie" presents a nuanced understanding of grief and happiness, revealing that they are not mutually exclusive but rather intricately connected. Morrie's teachings emphasize the significance of embracing both emotions and finding meaning in their coexistence. By acknowledging grief and allowing it to coexist with happiness, individuals can navigate the complexities of life and discover profound lessons about love, compassion, and the human spirit.

Literature Review

"The Book of Dead Days" by Marcus Sedgwick is a captivating literary work that delves into themes of grief, loss, and the pursuit of happiness. Set in a Victorian-era London, the novel follows the young protagonist, Boy, as he navigates a world infused with magic, danger, and the haunting presence of death. Sedgwick masterfully explores the complexities of grief, presenting it as an ever-present shadow that follows Boy on his journey. Through vivid and atmospheric prose, the novel immerses readers in a world where grief intertwines with the pursuit of happiness, challenging Boy's resilience and forcing him to confront his deepest fears. Sedgwick's skillful storytelling unravels the layers of grief, portraying it as a catalyst for personal growth and self-discovery. As Boy embarks on a quest to save himself and his friend Willow from the clutches of a malevolent sorcerer, grief becomes a driving force that fuels his determination and shapes his character. Sedgwick's exploration of grief in "The Book of Dead Days" invites readers to

reflect on the transformative power of loss and the resilience of the human spirit. The novel not only captivates with its atmospheric setting and engaging plot but also offers a profound understanding of grief's impact on individuals and the ways in which it can ultimately lead to a deeper appreciation of life's joys. Sedgwick's masterful storytelling and exploration of grief make "The Book of Dead Days" a compelling read that resonates long after the final page.

"The Art of Racing in the Rain" by Garth Stein is a poignant and captivating novel that explores the depths of human emotions, including grief, love, and resilience. The story unfolds through the eyes of Enzo, a wise and introspective dog, who narrates the life of his owner, Denny Swift, a professional race car driver. As Denny faces a series of hardships and tragedies, including the loss of his wife and a contentious custody battle, Enzo becomes a steadfast companion, offering comfort and unwavering loyalty. Stein skillfully portrays the profound grief experienced by Denny and the impact it has on his life, relationships, and pursuit of happiness. Through Enzo's insightful perspective, readers witness the transformative power of grief, as Denny learns to navigate his pain, find strength in adversity, and emerge with a renewed sense of purpose. Stein's portrayal of grief in "The Art of Racing in the Rain" is deeply moving, capturing the complexities of human emotions and the resilience of the human spirit. The novel reminds us of the profound bond between humans and their

animal companions, as Enzo becomes a source of solace and wisdom, guiding Denny through the darkest moments of his life. Stein's exploration of grief serves as a reminder that even in the face of immense loss, there is the potential for healing, growth, and the discovery of new joys. "The Art of Racing in the Rain" is a heart wrenching and uplifting novel that resonates with readers, offering a profound exploration of grief and the enduring power of love and resilience.

"The Unbearable Lightness of Being" by Milan Kundera is a captivating and thought-provoking novel that delves into existential themes of love, freedom, and the human experience. Set against the backdrop of the Prague Spring in the late 1960s, Kundera weaves a complex narrative that explores the intertwining lives of Tomas, Tereza, Sabina, and Franz. The novel challenges conventional notions of happiness and grief, suggesting that the inherent lightness of life is burdened by the weight of choice and responsibility. Kundera delves into the profound existential questions of whether our lives are predetermined or shaped by our choices, and how these choices impact our experiences of love and loss. Through his introspective and lyrical prose, Kundera invites readers to contemplate the fragility of existence and the paradoxical nature of human happiness and suffering. The characters in "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" grapple with their desires, fears, and the complexities of their relationships, leading

to moments of both joy and sorrow. Kundera's exploration of grief is nuanced, highlighting the deep emotional impact of loss and the longing for connection. Ultimately, the novel challenges readers to question the meaning and significance of their own lives, and to confront the existential dilemmas that shape their experiences of happiness and grief. "The Unbearable Lightness of Being" is a literary masterpiece that invites readers on a profound philosophical journey, prompting reflection on the nature of existence, the choices we make, and the eternal search for meaning and fulfillment in a world marked by both lightness and heaviness.

1.Common Perceptions of Grief and Happiness

1.1 Grief as an emotional burden

Society often views grief as a heavy burden that individuals must endure, associating it with suffering, sadness, and despair. It is commonly believed that grieving impedes happiness and prevents individuals from experiencing joy in their lives. Grief permeates the pages of "Tuesdays with Morrie" as an overwhelming emotional burden that weighs heavily on the characters. Throughout the memoir, the impending loss of Morrie Schwartz due to his battle with ALS engulfs Mitch Albom and others in a profound sense of sadness. This burden of grief manifests in their daily lives, affecting their emotional well-being and relationships. Albom grapples with the inevitable loss of his beloved professor, experiencing a deep sense of sorrow and helplessness. Morrie's declining physical

condition serves as a constant reminder of the impending void, intensifying the burden of grief. Strained relationships become evident as grief takes its toll, causing tension and guilt as Albom prioritizes his time with Morrie over other aspects of his life. The burden of grief extends beyond Albom, affecting Morrie's family and friends who struggle with their own grief and the anticipation of his death. Moreover, grief prompts existential anguish, forcing characters to confront their own mortality and question the meaning and purpose of life. The burden of grief renders the characters emotionally vulnerable, heightening their sensitivity and susceptibility to pain. However, amidst this burden, "Tuesdays with Morrie" also explores the potential for healing and growth. Morrie's wisdom and insights serve as a balm, helping Albom navigate the weight of grief and find solace. Ultimately, grief becomes a catalyst for transformation, leading Albom to embrace a more meaningful and compassionate life. Despite the emotional burden it poses, grief in "Tuesdays with Morrie" is a testament to the depth of human connection and the resilience of the human spirit.

1.2 Happiness as the absence of grief

Happiness is often perceived as the absence of grief or any negative emotions. The expectation is that in order to be truly happy, one must avoid or quickly overcome grief, focusing solely on positive experiences. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," happiness emerges as the absence of grief, offering solace and respite from the

emotional burdens that afflict the characters. Throughout the memoir, Mitch Albom seeks moments of happiness to alleviate the profound sadness brought by Morrie Schwartz's impending death. Happiness becomes a fleeting escape, a temporary reprieve from the weight of grief. Albom, in his quest for happiness, cherishes the simple joys that Morrie finds in nature, music, and human connection. These moments of happiness serve as a reminder that life, despite its inevitable sorrow, still holds glimpses of beauty and contentment. However, the transience of happiness underscores its fragility, highlighting the omnipresence of grief. The absence of grief allows happiness to briefly shine through, but it is always shadowed by the looming reality of Morrie's mortality. While happiness may offer temporary respite, it cannot fully eradicate the underlying grief that permeates the narrative. Instead, it serves as a poignant reminder of the bittersweet nature of life, emphasizing the delicate balance between moments of joy and the burden of grief. Ultimately, "Tuesdays with Morrie" illustrates that happiness, though fragile and fleeting, is an essential counterpoint to grief, providing a glimmer of light in the face of darkness.

2.The Link between Grief and Personal Growth

2.1 Embracing grief as a transformative process

"Tuesdays with Morrie" challenges the notion that grief is solely a negative experience. The book suggests that grief has the potential to be a catalyst for personal

growth and development. Through the exploration of grief, individuals are compelled to reflect, learn, and adapt, leading to profound changes in their perspectives and priorities. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief is portrayed as a transformative process that, when embraced, leads to profound personal growth and understanding. Mitch Albom's journey with his dying professor, Morrie Schwartz, serves as a testament to the transformative power of grief. As Albom confronts Morrie's impending death, he is forced to grapple with his own mortality and reevaluate his priorities and choices. Through the weight of grief, Albom learns to appreciate the present moment, cherishing the fleeting beauty of life. Morrie's teachings and wisdom become a guiding light, offering insights that help Albom navigate his grief and find purpose in the face of loss. Rather than avoiding or suppressing grief, Albom embraces it, allowing it to reshape his perspectives and values. Grief becomes a catalyst for compassion, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the human experience. Albom's transformation serves as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the capacity for personal growth that can emerge from embracing grief. "Tuesdays with Morrie" reminds us that grief, although painful, can lead to profound transformation and a renewed appreciation for life's precious moments. It is through the process of grieving and embracing the depths of our emotions that we can find healing, strength, and a newfound perspective that shapes our lives for the

better.

2.2 Grief as an opportunity for self-discovery

The grieving process often forces individuals to confront their deepest emotions, vulnerabilities, and existential questions. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief becomes a transformative journey that allows Mitch Albom to rediscover himself and find a deeper sense of purpose and fulfillment. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief emerges as a transformative journey, offering an opportunity for self-discovery and introspection. Mitch Albom's encounters with his dying professor, Morrie Schwartz, become a catalyst for deep personal reflection. As Albom grapples with the impending loss, he embarks on a profound exploration of his own values, priorities, and the meaning of life. Grief becomes a doorway to self-discovery, prompting Albom to question his own mortality and the way he has been living. Through Morrie's guidance, Albom learns to embrace vulnerability, confront his fears, and cultivate a deeper sense of empathy and compassion. Grief becomes a transformative force that breaks down walls, allowing Albom to uncover his authentic self and align his actions with his true values. Through this process, Albom discovers the power of love, forgiveness, and the importance of human connection. Ultimately, "Tuesdays with Morrie" presents grief not as a burden to be avoided, but as an invitation for self-exploration and growth. It teaches us that in the depths of grief, we can

find profound insights about ourselves, our relationships, and the very essence of our existence. Through embracing grief, we have the opportunity to embark on a journey of self-discovery, unlocking new dimensions of our identity and finding purpose amidst the pain.

2.3 Grief as a catalyst for resilience

The experience of grief can foster resilience and strength within individuals. By facing and navigating grief, individuals develop coping mechanisms, emotional resilience, and an increased capacity to appreciate life's joys and challenges. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief is portrayed as a catalyst for resilience, demonstrating the human capacity to endure and find strength in the face of immense loss. Mitch Albom's experience with the impending death of his beloved professor, Morrie Schwartz, reveals the transformative power of grief in fostering resilience. As Albom witnesses Morrie's physical decline, he confronts the raw emotions of sadness, despair, and helplessness. However, through their profound conversations, Morrie imparts invaluable lessons on embracing vulnerability and finding meaning in the midst of suffering. Grief becomes a crucible in which Albom discovers his own resilience, as he learns to navigate the complex emotions and challenges associated with loss. Morrie's unwavering spirit and teachings on love, forgiveness, and acceptance become guiding principles that empower Albom to persevere and find strength within himself. Grief, rather than breaking him, becomes a source of growth

and a testament to the indomitable human spirit. Through Morrie's example, Alбом witnesses the transformative impact of embracing grief and emerges with a renewed sense of resilience, determination, and a profound appreciation for the resilience inherent in the human experience. "Tuesdays with Morrie" reminds us that in the face of grief, resilience can flourish, enabling us to endure the darkest moments of our lives and emerge with newfound strength, compassion, and a deeper understanding of ourselves and others.

3. Grief as a Catalyst for Reevaluating Life's Priorities

3.1 Shift in perspective and values

Grief has the power to challenge and shift individuals' perspectives on what truly matters in life. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," Morrie Schwartz's terminal illness serves as a wake-up call for Mitch Alбом, prompting him to reevaluate his priorities, including his career, relationships, and pursuit of material wealth. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief profoundly impacts and shifts perspectives and values, leading to a transformative journey of self-discovery and reevaluation of what truly matters. Mitch Alбом's encounters with his dying professor, Morrie Schwartz, act as a catalyst for a profound shift in his perspective and values. As Alбом grapples with the impending loss, grief dismantles his preconceived notions and challenges his priorities. The experience prompts a profound reassessment of the significance of material possessions, status, and superficial achievements. Grief reveals the fleeting nature of life and highlights the

importance of meaningful relationships, love, and human connection. Morrie's teachings on the value of empathy, compassion, and embracing vulnerability become guiding principles that reshape Alбом's perspective. Through grief, Alбом learns to appreciate the present moment, cherish the beauty of simplicity, and find purpose in helping others. The experience deepens his understanding of the fragility of life and ignites a desire to live a more meaningful and authentic existence. Grief becomes a catalyst for a profound shift in values, leading Alбом to prioritize love, relationships, and the pursuit of genuine happiness. "Tuesdays with Morrie" reminds us that grief has the power to shake our foundations and challenge our values, ultimately leading us to a more profound understanding of what truly matters in life. It urges us to embrace the transformative potential of grief, allowing it to shape our perspectives and guide us towards a life of greater purpose, compassion, and authenticity.

3.2 Appreciation for the present moment

Grief highlights the fragility and transience of life, prompting individuals to embrace the present moment and find happiness in simple pleasures. Morrie Schwartz emphasizes the importance of cherishing everyday experiences and cultivating gratitude, which contributes to a more meaningful and fulfilling life. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief has a profound impact by instilling a deep appreciation for the present moment. As Mitch Alбом witnesses the decline of his

beloved professor, Morrie Schwartz, the weight of grief compels him to recognize the preciousness of every passing moment. The imminent loss of Morrie serves as a stark reminder of the transience of life, urging Albus to embrace the present with unwavering gratitude. Through their heartfelt conversations, Morrie imparts wisdom about the significance of being fully present and savoring the simple joys of life. Grief becomes a catalyst for Albus to shift his focus from future aspirations and material pursuits to the richness of the present. The once overlooked aspects of daily life, such as the beauty of nature, the warmth of human connection, and the joy of laughter, become magnified and cherished. Albus learns to slow down, immerse himself in the present moment, and find solace in the power of now. The impact of grief deepens his appreciation for the fleeting nature of existence, urging him to seize every opportunity to experience and relish the beauty that surrounds him. "Tuesdays with Morrie" underscores the transformative effect of grief by awakening a profound gratitude for the present moment, reminding us to embrace the here and now, as it is the only time we truly possess. It serves as a poignant reminder to prioritize the richness of each passing moment, cultivating a deeper sense of gratitude, contentment, and a fuller engagement with life's simple pleasures.

3.3 Reconnection with essential values

Grief often prompts individuals to reconnect with their core values and seek authenticity in their lives. By reflecting on

the inevitability of mortality, individuals may realign their priorities, focusing on love, relationships, and personal growth, which can ultimately lead to a deeper sense of happiness and fulfillment. In "Tuesdays with Morrie," grief has a profound impact on individuals, leading them to reconnect with essential values that may have been neglected or forgotten. As Mitch Albus faces the impending loss of his beloved professor, Morrie Schwartz, grief serves as a catalyst for introspection and a reevaluation of priorities. The weight of grief prompts Albus to question the value of material success, societal expectations, and superficial achievements. Instead, he is compelled to rediscover and embrace core values such as love, compassion, and meaningful human connections. Through his heartfelt conversations with Morrie, Albus learns the importance of empathy, kindness, and the power of giving and receiving love. Grief strips away the superficial layers of life, exposing the essence of what truly matters. It becomes a transformative force that guides individuals to focus on the fundamental aspects of existence that bring fulfillment and purpose. As Albus grapples with grief, he reconnects with his own humanity and rediscovers the significance of cherishing relationships, expressing gratitude, and living a life aligned with his true values. "Tuesdays with Morrie" serves as a poignant reminder that grief can serve as a catalyst for individuals to reassess their priorities and realign their lives with the essential values that bring meaning and fulfillment. It emphasizes the importance of

nurturing and cultivating these values as a foundation for leading a purposeful and enriching life. Through the lens of grief, the characters in the book rediscover the power and significance of essential values, ultimately finding solace and a sense of purpose in their reconnection with what truly matters.

Conclusion:

In Mitch Albom's captivating memoir, "Tuesdays with Morrie," the exploration of grief and happiness reveals a profound paradox—a delicate interplay between two seemingly contrasting emotions that ultimately shape the human experience. Through the poignant relationship between Albom and his dying professor, Morrie Schwartz, the book explores the intricate nature of grief and happiness, highlighting their coexistence and the transformative power they hold.

Grief, as depicted in the memoir, is an emotional burden that engulfs the characters, suffusing their lives with a deep sense of sadness and loss. The impending death of Morrie due to his battle with ALS casts a shadow over Albom's world, leaving him grappling with a torrent of emotions. The burden of grief is palpable, influencing Albom's thoughts, actions, and relationships. It serves as a constant reminder of the fragility of life, prompting introspection and existential contemplation. Through the lens of grief, the characters in "Tuesdays with Morrie" experience vulnerability, exposing the raw depths of their emotions and amplifying their sensitivity to pain.

However, amidst the weight of grief, the memoir also illuminates the presence of happiness—an ethereal force that emerges as a respite from sorrow and a source of solace. Albom seeks moments of happiness, cherishing the simple joys that Morrie finds in the present moment, nature, and human connection. These moments of happiness serve as beacons of light in the midst of darkness, offering glimpses of hope and reminding the characters of the beauty that still exists in the world. The paradox lies in the coexistence of grief and happiness, where happiness becomes even more precious in the face of grief, acting as a counterbalance to the weight of sorrow.

Moreover, grief becomes a catalyst for profound transformation and self-discovery. As Albom confronts the impending loss of Morrie, his journey through grief becomes an opportunity for introspection and a reassessment of his values and priorities. The burden of grief prompts a shift in perspective, challenging the superficialities of life and emphasizing the importance of authentic connections, love, and compassion. Through Morrie's wisdom and teachings, Albom learns to embrace vulnerability and finds meaning in the face of suffering. Grief becomes a catalyst for personal growth, resilience, and a deeper understanding of the human experience.

The paradox of grief and happiness in "Tuesdays with Morrie" highlights the complex and intertwined nature of these emotions. It reminds us that grief does not negate the possibility of happiness, nor does

happiness erase the reality of grief. Instead, the two coexist, influencing and shaping one another in profound ways. The memoir demonstrates that true happiness does not lie in the absence of grief, but rather in the ability to find moments of joy, gratitude, and connection even amidst the depths of sorrow.

Furthermore, "Tuesdays with Morrie" serves as a poignant reminder of the impermanence of life and the importance of embracing the present moment. Through the characters' experiences, the memoir underscores the fragile nature of human existence and the need to cherish every passing moment. Grief acts as a wake-up call, jolting the characters out of complacency and prompting them to appreciate the richness and beauty of life's simplest pleasures.

To Close, Mitch Albom's "Tuesdays with Morrie" weaves a profound exploration of the paradoxical relationship between grief and happiness. The memoir reveals that grief and happiness are not mutually exclusive, but rather intricately connected, shaping the human experience in profound ways. The burden of grief permeates the narrative, influencing the characters' emotions and relationships. However, amidst the weight of grief, happiness emerges as a precious and transformative force. Grief becomes an

opportunity for self-discovery, personal growth, and a reassessment of values.

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