





“ My husband and I used to wonder who would go first, but I never thought it would happen so soon.

All of a sudden I was eating dinner alone, I was sleeping alone, and I had nobody to talk to when I woke up in a panic.

People would come by and ask what they could do, and I couldn't think of what to say except, “make him come back.” I knew I should start taking care of myself and get out. But I just couldn't do it by myself.

*People would come by and ask what they could do, and I couldn't think of what to say except, 'Make him come back.'*

So I thought about who would understand. Carmen wasn't my closest friend, but I liked her and I knew she'd lost her son to cancer a few years ago. She seemed glad I called, and said she could rearrange her exercise time for me. We could go for a walk at night.

We walked together for about a year. I know it wasn't always convenient for her, but I think it saved my life. No matter how sad I got during the day, I knew I was going to be able to talk to her. ”

— Pamela

---

The pain you feel at the loss of your loved one can be overwhelming. It may be difficult to imagine that you'll ever come to terms with this loss. But you can heal. Even though you'll always carry this experience with you, you can learn to live a full life again.

We hope this booklet will help you find your way through this difficult time. You may not want to read all of this booklet right now. It may be more helpful a little later. For now, see the Survival Tips on page 5 for suggestions to help you get through the first few days.



## *What's Inside*

---

# The First Few Days



“My dad had a fatal heart attack when I was 34. You’d think that I’d be able to deal with it better. But when I heard I just fell apart. I felt like my whole childhood just disappeared.”

— *Lorena*

Whether the person who died was your parent, spouse, child, or friend, one thing is the same: someone you love is no longer near you. Your loved one can no longer play the same role in your life, and you can no longer play the role you played for your loved one. It’s going to be hard to get used to.

How will you manage? The truth is, no one can answer this for you. Your grief is every bit as unique as your loved one, and you must find your own way through it. But you can find help by learning from the experiences of other people who have grieved, as presented in this booklet. Others have found that there is a way forward. They’ve learned that grief is a process, not a fixed state. While the road ahead isn’t the one you had hoped for, you’re still on a road. You’ll move along it, and you’ll be in a different place than you are now.

.....

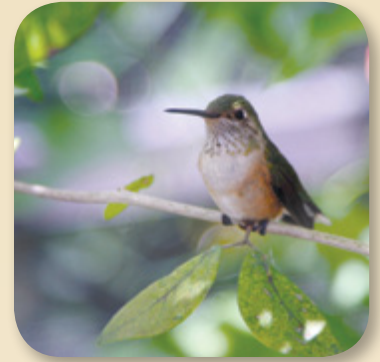
## *It’s okay to feel numb*

In the first days and weeks after your loved one has died, you may not feel like yourself. It may seem as if you don’t feel anything at all. The numbness you feel is your body’s way of getting you through the initial pain. It’s like anesthesia. Eventually you will feel again, but for now it’s okay if you’re not feeling the things you thought you’d feel. Even after you move beyond this numbness, it may return now and then, especially on holidays and birthdays.

## Survival Tips for You

Here are a few things to keep in mind during the first days after your loved one's death:

- **Take care of yourself.** Now more than ever, you need your strength. Eat well, drink plenty of water, and get enough rest. Physical activity can help, too. If you find yourself struggling to care for yourself, ask someone to help you.
- **Try to be patient with yourself.** You may feel as if your emotions are out of your control. But it's normal to feel crazy at a time like this. As much as you can't believe it now, you won't always feel this consuming grief. You can find a new way to be yourself. But it will take time.
- **Feel what you feel.** If you feel numb right now, that's okay. If you're ready to cry, then let the painful feelings come. Don't try to hold them back. No matter how much it hurts, going through them is the only way to heal.
- **Let others help.** Many people will want to help you but won't know how. They may be afraid of upsetting you more. Tell them when you want to talk and when you want to be alone. Let them run errands for you. If you can, say what you need.



### PRACTICAL CONCERNS

Right now there are a lot of details to take care of: the obituary, the funeral arrangements, the burial plans. Your social worker or care providers can give you information that will help you with decisions and arrangements.

---

### *How Friends and Family Can Help*

If you're a friend or family member of someone who's grieving, you may be wondering how you can most help. The ideas below, and on pages 14 and 15 of this booklet, may be useful.

**Listen.** Really listen. Let those who are grieving tell and retell their story, without fear of criticism. Don't try to find magic words that will minimize their pain. Don't say, "I know how you feel." Just be there and let them talk freely.

**Help with responsibilities.** If you're close to the grieving people, don't wait to be asked for help. Stop by and start helping. Make a list of what they normally do at home, from taking care of children to fixing things to paying bills. Try to help with as much as possible at first — and then help them remember what to do themselves.

**Stay nearby.** Continue to be available in the weeks, months, and years ahead. Remember that they may need you more later on. It will take a long time to get through this, and they'll need your kindness and acceptance all along.

---

---

# Understanding Grief



Right now you may feel confused and disorganized. You may worry that you're going crazy. You may not want to accept the reality of where you are. And it's hard to move forward when you want so desperately to go back. Learning more about the grief process is the best way to begin to understand the broad range of normal reactions. It will help you feel more in control and patient with yourself, and will give you hope that you'll get to a better place.

## What Is Grief?

Your pain over this loss can be consuming and confusing. Some people find it helpful to think of their response in two ways: **grief**, or what happens to you, and **mourning**, or what you do with it.

**Grief is what happens to you when you experience a terrible loss, the numbness and sadness and anger that you feel inside.** Grief is the process you go through as your emotions struggle to catch up with your reality. And this is exhausting in every way — emotionally, physically, spiritually, and socially. However painful and difficult, grief is natural and necessary. As time passes, your grief changes and you can move to a different place.

**Mourning is the way you respond to or express your grief.** It's crying, talking about it, writing about it, making a scrapbook, and visiting the grave. Mourning is hard work, too. Some days you won't want to do anything at all. But mourning will move you more steadily along the path. It will help you come to terms with your loss.

---

### *Myths about grieving*

*All of these statements are false:*

- Most people experience grief in the same stages or steps.
- Not thinking about it makes you get over it faster.
- Your goal should be to get over it as soon as possible.
- Crying a lot is a sign of weakness.
- After you resolve your grief, you'll never have to deal with it again.
- Adults and children grieve in the same way.
- Nobody can really help you.

“My twin brother died in an accident when we were 39 years old. We hadn’t lived in the same town for 15 years, but we talked pretty often. We used to go on backpacking trips together. When he died I felt like I’d been shot. Like I was walking around with this big hole in me, and I couldn’t close it up. I could feel it every second of the day. Our sister framed a picture of my brother and me and put it in my office. He’s got his hand on my shoulder.”

— *George*



## How Long Does It Last?

**You’ll go through grief on your own timeline.** You may never be completely over this loss. But your grief will probably take you to a place where you’re able to live a normal life with a daily routine. And no matter how long your grieving takes, it will probably feel as if it’s endless. Try to remember that:

- Even as you progress, it won’t always be in a predictable, linear way. Some days you’ll move forward, some days back.
- Moving through grief faster or slower is not an indication of your own strength or weakness.
- The length of your grief is not a measure of how much you loved the person who died.





## AM I NORMAL?

You may be surprised by the way you feel. It may not make sense at all. If you're not feeling what you think you should feel, you may start to feel uneasy, or even guilty. These are some things you may be feeling — and are completely normal:

**Shock and denial.** *"I feel like I'm on autopilot. This can't be true."*

**Anger.** *"Why him? Why us? Why now?"*

**Guilt.** *"Did I do enough? Did I do the right thing? If only I had. . ."*

**Relief.** *"At last this ordeal is over! I'm glad she's not suffering anymore. I'm glad it's over for my sake, too."*

**Anxiety.** *"I think I'm going crazy. Something else bad is going to happen to me."*

**Depression.** *"What's the use? How can I ever go on?"*

**Confusion.** *"I can't think anymore. I'm totally disorganized."*

## What Can I Expect?

Even though you're grieving in your own way, some experiences are very common. You'll likely find that:

- You'll have good days and bad days, good hours and bad hours. Sometimes it may feel as if you're going up and down on a roller coaster. Grief doesn't progress in a straight line.
- Your emotions may come on stronger and faster than they have in the past.
- Some people won't know how to comfort you, and may accidentally say hurtful things. Other people — sometimes people you didn't expect — can be helpful and comforting.
- You'll experience grief differently from your spouse, from other people close to you, and from others who have lost loved ones.
- The healing that comes through grief takes longer than most people expect, but it does come.
- You won't be the same as you were before — but it's okay to build a "new normal" from where you are now.

*The next section gives more specific information on what you might experience.*





---

# Experiencing Grief

“At first I thought I was going crazy. I was constantly afraid that someone else in my family was going to die, too. I was in a panic all the time. It still hurts, but now I can make some sense of what I went through. It’s like first everything had to come apart before I could start putting it back together.”

— *Robin*



---

Though nearly everyone experiences grief at some point, every person’s grief is unique. There’s no “right” way to do it. There’s no proper timeline. Nevertheless, there are experiences and feelings that are common among grieving parents.

The following pages discuss ways many people experience grief. Reading these, you’ll see that pain often shows up in every aspect of a person’s life. You’ll see that it can affect your mind, body, heart, soul — even your relationships. And hopefully, you’ll see that no matter how you feel right now, you’re not alone in your experience.



“I kept forgetting what I was talking about in the middle of a sentence. One day I called an electrician, and when he got there I couldn’t remember what I needed. We walked around the house and found it. Then he held up two kinds of switches and asked me which one I wanted. I just couldn’t decide. It seemed like a much bigger decision than it was. I just sat down on a chair and cried. He was nice about it all.”

— *Margaret*

*forgetful*

## The Grieving Mind — *Your Thoughts*

You wish with all your heart that your loved one could still be with you. It takes time for your mind to let go of that wish and accept what happened. And until it does, it’s natural for your mind to try to rewrite what happened and create a different outcome.

Coming to accept the reality of your loved one’s death requires so much mental energy that you may feel like you’re a different person altogether. Especially early on, you may feel:

- **Anxiety.** You may feel anxious all the time or have panic attacks. You may worry about unrelated things, or you may fear that more terrible things will happen.
- **Disbelief.** You may be unable or unwilling to accept that this has actually happened.
- **Guilt.** You may be consumed with thoughts of “If only I had” and “What if?”
- **Forgetful.** You may be distracted, forgetful, and unable to focus.
- **Annoyed.** You may be irritated with everyday conversations, and with other people’s ability to return to everyday life.

These are normal reactions to your loss, and will decrease with time.

### *What May Help* .....

**Take care of yourself.** Get as much rest as you can. Try to exercise and find ways to take time out from grief work now and then.

**Feel what you feel.** Pay attention to your thoughts, but try not to judge them. Don’t feel like you have to repress strong feelings.

**Let others help.** If you feel you can’t move forward, reach out for support from others. Read or ask about how others have gone through grief.

.....

## The Grieving Body — *Your Physical Symptoms*

When your loved one died, you probably felt an intense lack of control — there’s nothing you can do anymore to help. It’s natural for your body to tighten up at this point, to try to regain control. This takes more physical energy than most people imagine. Many people experience actual physical pain or symptoms of shock. Most people feel exhausted all the time. You may also experience:

- **Sleep problems.** You may have trouble sleeping, or sleep all the time to avoid the pain.
- **Low energy.** You may be so worn out that you feel like you just can’t do anything.
- **Changes in appetite and weight.** You may want to eat all the time and gain weight, or you may not want to eat at all and lose weight.
- **Other symptoms.** You may experience one or more of the following:
  - heaviness in your chest
  - hyperventilating, or difficulty breathing
  - dizziness
  - sighing, feeling a “tightness” when you yawn

*If any of these symptoms concern you, or don’t improve over time, contact your doctor or a bereavement counselor.*

### *What May Help* .....

**Take care of yourself.** Eat a balanced diet and drink plenty of water. Get enough sleep so your body can rest. Try to exercise, even if it’s just a five-minute walk.

**Be patient with yourself.** Go slow, and lower your expectations of what you can do in a day. Your body is already working hard!

.....



“I couldn’t sleep for weeks. I couldn’t let go and relax. It was like I thought if I wasn’t watching, something else terrible was going to happen and I wouldn’t be able to stop it. Or maybe my girlfriend would come back and I’d miss her. She’d come and see I was asleep so she’d leave again. When I did fall asleep, I’d wake up in a sudden panic.”

— *Spencer*

*panic*  
*disbelief*



“My mother had a stroke when she was 90. Before then she was totally independent, but after the stroke I helped her every day. Even though she was in a home for the last two years, she still wanted me to wash her hair and feed her. I loved my mom, and I’m glad I had the chance to be there for her, but by the time it was over I was completely exhausted. I was relieved that it was over. I felt bad for feeling that way, but I don’t know how long I could have kept it up.”

— *Lois*

*guilt*

## The Grieving Heart— *Your Emotions*

The sadness you feel at this time can be one of the most difficult and consuming parts of your grief. You may also experience feelings you didn’t know you had in you. It’s normal to feel a whole range of things. Here are a few of the emotional reactions reported by others:

- **Sorrow.** You cry all the time, unexpectedly or uncontrollably. Your sorrow may increase for weeks or months.
- **Guilt.** You feel guilty over something you did or didn’t do, or something you feel. You think you could have done something to prevent this.
- **Anger.** You’re mad at yourself, at others, at the person who died, at God.
- **Relief.** You’re relieved that at last the ordeal is over, especially if your loved one was suffering a long time.
- **Deep longing and loneliness.** You want so badly to hold your loved one again. It’s hard to imagine anyone could understand how you feel.
- **Needing to talk.** You need to tell and retell the story of your loved one’s death. You need to talk about your relationship.
- **Unexpected reactions.** You laugh too loudly, and you snap back too quickly. You respond in ways that seem unlike you.

### *What May Help* .....

**Feel what you feel.** Cry as much as you need to. Yell and scream if you need to. Don’t try to hold your feelings back.

**Be patient with yourself.** Try not to judge yourself. Remember that there’s no right or wrong way to grieve. Your reactions will change over time.

**Let others help.** Look for a compassionate and patient listener.

.....

## The Grieving Soul— *Your Sense of Meaning*

When a loved one dies, your understanding of the meaning of life and death comes to the forefront. Whether your beliefs are grounded in an organized religion or in your own philosophical approach, it's natural to look closely at them at this point. Remember that being angry and upset doesn't mean you don't trust your spiritual foundations. It just means you're seeing them from a new place. You may:

- Be reassured that what you believe helps you understand what comes next and how to go on.
- Question your beliefs and begin a new search for understanding.
- Feel alone — that not even your spiritual leaders can fully understand your grief.
- Struggle with the question of whether this was God's will.

### *What May Help* .....

**Take care of yourself.** Try to identify the things that make you feel grounded. These could be your values and beliefs, or your garden. Or they could be creative activities such as cooking or painting that will focus you on the beauty of the physical world.

**Feel what you feel.** Talk about your feelings, whatever they are. Create a special place — either indoors or out — where you can mourn for your loved one.

**Let others help.** Some people who understand death differently than you may say things that seem insensitive. Remember that most people are trying to comfort you in the best way they know how. Seek out someone who can understand your spiritual perspective.

.....



“For me, what helped the most was to go up to the mountains and lie on a rock and look at the clouds. I know my wife isn't floating around up there, but it's a place I can talk to her and talk to God. I can imagine them both up there listening and trying to help me figure out how to raise the kids.”

— *Alan*

*time for  
yourself*



“After my wife died, my friend situation changed. Some people invited me over more. I think they didn’t want me to be alone. But there were a couple of women, people we’d known a long time, who I could tell didn’t want to be in the same room alone with me. Did they think I was going to be interested in them since my wife was gone? Well, I wasn’t. It made me more sad.”

— *Marcos*

*avoidance*

## Grieving in Your Relationships

The death of your loved one can put a strain on your relationships. You may hope people will know what you need. Some will, but others may not. They may be at a loss for how to help you. These pages describe some thoughts that may be going through your head and theirs.

*What you may be thinking:*

- ***“Why are people avoiding me?”***

Many people don’t know what to say and are afraid of upsetting you. They want to be able to make you feel better and don’t know how. Some will be glad to have you ask them to help you.

- ***“No one can ever understand — even my family and closest friends have no idea what I’m going through.”***

It’s true. Nobody else can know exactly what this is to you. Everyone in the family is hurting and trying to work through their grief. Talking about how you’re feeling often helps. Try to be patient. If there’s something you think might help, you have the right to ask for it. Consider joining a bereavement support group to be with others who are trying to cope. See the resources listed on page 23.

- ***“People keep expecting me to be over it, and I’m not.”***

Even those who have lost a loved one themselves might expect you to move through your grief faster than you can. Not everyone understands that you have to go through this at your own pace — and handle it in your own way. But you do, and nobody should expect you to do otherwise.

### A NEW SET OF HARD QUESTIONS

Early on you’ll have to fortify yourself against unintentionally painful comments. Some people should know better; others have no idea you’ve suffered a loss.

It helps to think through answers to common questions you may face, such as: How are you? How was your summer? Are you married?

What are you doing for the holidays?

.....

*What your family and friends may be thinking:*

- ***“I don’t know how to respond and I’m afraid I’ll make things worse. I should probably stay away.”***

They’ve already lost a loved one. Don’t let them lose you, too. Be there for them and listen. Help with daily tasks. Be looking out for when they might need you.

- ***“I don’t know what to say. I don’t want to upset them.”***

Nothing you say is going to take away the pain. But here are some things that may comfort you both:

- Tell them how sorry you are, and how much you care. Then let the bereaved do most of the talking. Letting them talk about it over and over will help them.
- Talk about the loved one’s unique and endearing qualities. Share stories you remember about the loved one. Use the person’s name.
- Resist the urge to find a positive moral lesson in this death. Don’t tell them that they’ll get over it. Don’t make comments suggesting that the care given the loved one was inadequate.

- ***“I don’t think she’s dealing with it in the right way.”***

Bereaved people often act in ways that may seem inappropriate or hard to understand. Be patient and understanding. If you’re truly worried that they’re grieving in an unhealthy way, talk to a professional about your concerns.

- ***“They should be feeling better by now.”***

No one can predict how long the grief process will take. It takes longer than most people think. Telling them they should be better by now won’t make them get better faster.



“When my friend Luisa’s dad died, I thought she’d be okay. Her dad was pretty old and he had cancer for two years. Everyone had time to prepare and say goodbye. After the funeral I was expecting her to be back up to speed, and she just wasn’t. One day we met for lunch and we were talking about something else — work, I think — and she started crying. I guess she had a complicated relationship with her dad. She still needed to talk about it.”

— Jenny



.....

*listening*



“When Kim died, I think there was a piece of me that died, too. She was the one who brought out my sense of humor. I guess she was the one I wanted to make laugh. I used to think people invited me to their parties because I was funny and entertaining. Now I think they invite me because they feel sorry for me. Sometimes I’d rather be around people who didn’t know me before.”

— *John*

*new  
roles*

## New Roles, New Friends— *Building a “New Normal”*

*In many ways, you’re the same person you were before your loved one died.*

But now is so much different. You’ve lost the role you played in your loved one’s life — as partner, son or daughter, parent, or friend. If the person who died lived with you, then you’ve lost a big part of your daily routine.

Part of your grief and mourning will be about learning how to adjust to daily life without your loved one. Another part will be about adjusting to other relationships you shared with the person who died. Friends who know you primarily through your loved one — such as people who spent time with the two of you together — may not know how to be around you. Others may feel uncomfortable talking about their own relationships or their daily lives around you. These relationships may make you uncomfortable as well.

Some relationships will survive these changes, and others won’t. It’s an extension of your loss that can be surprisingly painful. Keep in mind that from the position you’re in now, there are other people — people you may not have known or noticed before — whom you can connect with now.

This is part of building your “new normal.” Your life will never be the way it was before. But you’ll have new people and new activities and new roles to play that will one day feel normal and be a big part of who you are.





# Mourning

“The first thing I did was get out of the little responsibilities. I quit helping at the school. I quit the committees I was on. I didn’t volunteer for anything extra at work. I just couldn’t keep up. I couldn’t stay awake. I couldn’t stand to be around all those people. People thought I was going to get lonely and depressed. But I needed time to myself. I needed to be able to think again about what I really wanted to be doing with my time.”

— *Susanna*



Once the initial shock and the attention have passed, you’ll still need to live through your everyday life. The things you do now are part of your mourning, the ways you choose to deal with your loss. They happen one day — one hour — at a time. They happen, too, on holidays and other special days. Building a new daily routine can help you feel more stable. Then you’ll be more ready on special occasions to remember your loved one in meaningful ways.



## NOT NOW

Major decisions or life changes — moving, changing jobs — may tempt you, but they're not a good idea right now. Give yourself some time to adjust to your new reality before you make big changes.

## Day by Day

It takes time to figure out how to be in the world without your loved one. You don't need to tackle all your problems at once. But it's a good idea to start thinking about how you're going to build your life again. Here are some ideas that may help:

- **Give yourself plenty of time.** Spend time alone, and spend time with others. Don't try to do as much as you used to in a day. Think about how your priorities may have shifted during this experience and how they affect the choices you make now.
- **Express your feelings.** Find ways to let your feelings out. Writing your thoughts and feelings in a journal can help you sort through them. It can also allow you to look back and see the progress you're making.
- **Take care of yourself.** You're going to need extra strength for a long time. Eat at least two good meals a day, drink lots of water, and get plenty of sleep. Try to build regular exercise into your day. If there's anything that makes you feel better, give yourself a treat now and then.
- **Set small goals for every day.** Your goals can be simple: getting dressed for the day, going out with friends, doing an activity you enjoy. Give yourself a pat on the back for everything you do.
- **Have a plan for the day.** Sticking to daily routines may give you a sense of order. Because it's easy to forget when you're grieving, keep a calendar to help you remember what to do (appointments, bills to pay, etc.).

## Holidays and Special Days

Some days — holidays, birthdays, anniversaries — may just be more difficult. When everyone else is celebrating, you may be feeling a terrible hole in your heart. It's important to think and talk about your loved one and recognize your feelings on these days. This is a chance to remake these days in a new way. It may help to do the things below:

- **Plan ahead.** Discuss with your family how you want to spend the day. Don't expect others to read your mind, and allow others to make their own choices that you didn't expect. Plan on extra time to remember your loved one in a special way.
- **Choose your company.** Holidays and special days are hard times to be alone. That doesn't mean you have to be with the same people as usual, though. You may want to volunteer in a soup kitchen or hospice, for example.
- **Choose your parties.** Everyone in the family should know it's okay to participate, to watch, or to choose not to attend family activities.
- **Choose the traditions you'll celebrate.** Traditions are symbols of happy times together. Keep the ones that still make sense to you, but don't feel obligated to bake or send cards if you don't feel like it. This may be a time to try on some new traditions. Then give yourself the freedom to reconsider these changes next year.



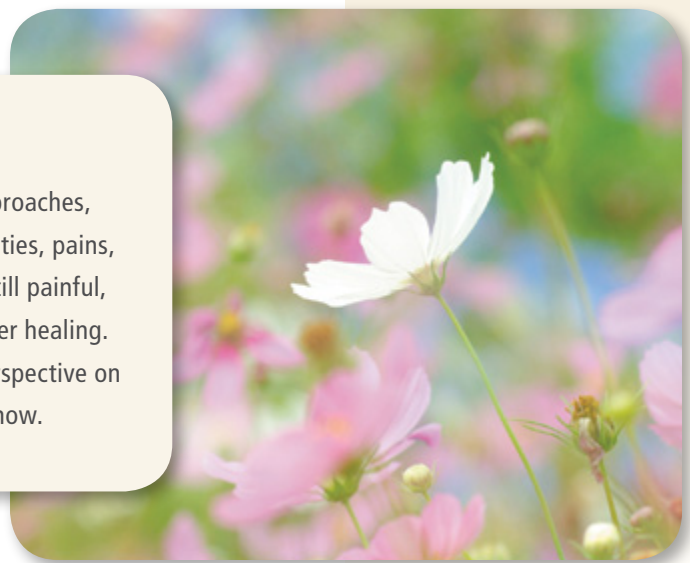
“My dad used to love birds, and he used to always go birdwatching on his birthday. I never went with him then; he had his birdwatching buddies. But I go now, and I take my children and grandchildren if they can go. It's a way that I can show them what an interesting person he was.”

— *Danny*

*traditions*

### ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS

As the anniversary of your loved one's death approaches, you may experience a return of the intense anxieties, pains, and memories you felt at the beginning. While still painful, these times can provide an opportunity for further healing. Acknowledging them can help you develop a perspective on your loss and understand how it fits in your life now.





“Cal and I were married 46 years. I never in a million years thought I’d live longer than him. But here I am. My daughter-in-law brought a box of stationery to the funeral and asked people to write their memories of him and mail them to me. People wrote stories about his childhood and his war experience that I hadn’t even heard. And some people wrote about things they did with both of us together. I kept getting the letters in the mail for the first few weeks. They helped me see that he’d meant a lot to other people, too.”

— *Eleanor*

*memories*

## Rituals and Remembrances

You’ve had no control over much of what has happened as a result of your loved one’s death. But mourning rituals are something you can choose. Don’t worry about what others think of how you choose to remember your loved one. Do what means most to you and your family. Rituals that have meaning to you can help you remember and heal.

- **Rituals for birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays:**

- Light a special candle for your loved one.
- Eat your loved one’s favorite foods.
- Visit the cemetery and take a gift for your loved one.
- Let go of a balloon with a note or wish to your loved one.
- Plant a tree or garden where you can go to remember your loved one.

- **Expressions:**

- Write letters, poems, or music to your loved one and put them in a special place.
- Create a new tradition in memory of your loved one.
- Keep a journal of your grieving. Write down how you feel. Write about who was at the service. Record the advice you were given. Discuss your personal triumphs and failures. Date each entry.

- **Mementos:**

- Make a memory book with photos and written memories.
- Create a memory box of your loved one’s favorite things.
- Put something special of your loved one’s in a prominent place.
- Make a quilt from your loved one’s favorite clothes.

- **Giving to others:**

- Contribute to a cause your loved one cared about, or to a group dedicated to fighting the cause of your loved one’s death.
- Volunteer to help others in a way that is meaningful to your family.

## SIGNS OF

# Progress



.....

“I've suffered a lot of loss in my 35 years. My mom died when I was young, and I grew up in about 5 different families. I had to move away from a lot of different friends. Then my husband died just after our second baby was born. But the one thing I keep finding is that somehow or other, if you let it, the love always comes back. If you're open to love, the people who were good to you show up in your life again.”

— *Lori*

You can tell you're getting better when your grief reactions gradually decrease. You still cry a lot, but not quite as much as before. You're still disorganized and forgetful, but less so than you used to be. Slowly you'll become more able to return to the activities of daily life. These are also clues that you're beginning to heal:

### When you're on your own

- You know in your heart that your loved one will never come back.
- It feels good to remember and share your memories.
- You no longer need someone with you all the time.
- You can drive somewhere by yourself without crying.
- The music you shared with your loved one is no longer so painful.
- You no longer feel tired all the time.
- You can get through more of the activities of daily living.

### When you're with others

- Comments people make seem a little less painful.
- You can reach out to help someone in a similar situation.
- You can laugh without feeling guilty.
- You can make new friends and enjoy being with them.
- You acknowledge your new life and even discover personal growth from the grief you experienced.

### What if I keep getting worse?

Most of the feelings you have right now are harder to bear and last longer than you ever thought possible. But they should gradually subside. If they don't — if you're unable to start returning to the basic activities of normal life or if your grief is affecting others — it may be time to get professional help from your doctor or a bereavement counselor.

---

# Reaching Out

“I thought I’d be able to work through it. Tina was sick for over a year, so I knew it was coming.

My family was around all the time. In our family we don’t go for outside help. But I didn’t really want to talk to my family.

My friends all seemed busy. I was stuck. So I went to this group. I didn’t think I’d like it. But I guess I did, because I kept going. In fact, it’s been six years and I still talk to those guys. They always know what to say.”

— *David*



.....

As you make your way through grief, you need the support and understanding of those around you. Some friends and family can be helpful. Many people need to seek out other sources of support as well. These can include religious leaders, professional counselors, and support and self-help groups.

## RESOURCES

The resources listed below offer information, support, and the chance to connect with others.

### Intermountain Healthcare

#### Homecare Bereavement Support

Telephone number: (801) 887-6043

Intermountain Homecare provides support services throughout Utah to bereaved family members for 12 months after the death. Bereavement support groups, facilitated by trained clinicians, are free and open to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one.

#### Primary Children's Medical Center

Telephone number: (801) 662-3774

Primary Children's Medical Center offers periodic classes and a yearly memorial tribute to help grieving parents and siblings. There is no charge for participation.

**Other Intermountain hospitals** offer bereavement support groups or can connect you to local resources. Call your hospital and ask for Social Work Services.

### National organizations

#### GriefNet

Telephone number: (734) 761-1960

Website for adults: [www.griefnet.org](http://www.griefnet.org)

Website for children: <http://kidsaid.com>

Online groups for adult grief support; separate online support groups for children under 12 and for teens (with consent from parent or guardian).

#### Grieving.com

Website: [www.grieving.com](http://www.grieving.com)

Online grief support and help for coping with loss; includes forums on various themes and topics related to grief and recovery.



---

## READINGS

Attig, T. *How We Grieve: Relearning the World*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; 2010.

Kushner, H. S. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York, NY: Anchor; 2004.

Rando, T. A. *How to Go on Living When Someone You Love Dies*. New York, NY: Bantam; 1991.

Schweibert, P, Deklyen C. *Tear Soup*. Portland, OR: Grief Watch; 2005.

Shapiro, E. *Grief as a Family Process*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press; 1994.

Westberg, G. E. *Good Grief: A Constructive Approach to the Problem of Loss*. Philadelphia, PE: Fortress Press; 1979.

Wolfelt, A. *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*. Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press; 2004.

Wolfelt, A. *The Wilderness of Grief: Finding Your Way*. Fort Collins, CO: Companion Press; 2007.

Wolfelt, A. *Understanding Grief: Helping Yourself Heal*. London: Routledge; 1992.

---

