



REMEMBERING THOSE WE LOVE

Memorial traditions are a healthy way to remember and honor our loved ones. Simple traditions can be celebrated alone or with family and friends. They can take place during special holidays or any time that has meaning for you. The important thing is to take the time to intentionally focus on memories of the persons that you have loved but who are no longer with you. Below are some ideas that may be useful to you.

- Anytime during the holidays or during holiday dinners light a candle in memory of your loved one. Add a favorite photograph, if desired.
- Offer a dinner prayer, meditation, or toast to your loved one.
- Display a single fresh flower to celebrate the life of your loved one.
- Create a memory book with several photos, momentos, and journaling. It doesn't need to be a big book. It can sit on your coffee table to encourage friends and family to also remember.
- Give yourself permission to remember happy times and events.
- Create a special holiday decoration for loved ones who are no longer with you. Display it during the holidays to help you feel close to them.
- In spring, plant a tree or bush in your yard, or purchase a small plant to pot. Have a planting ceremony and on special occasions decorate the plant with objects that will help you remember special times.
- Use a favorite activity of your loved one to bring joy to others. If they enjoyed gardening, take some flowers to someone who may need them. If they liked to watch movies, share a movie with someone who could use the company. If they loved cooking, share a meal with a friend. If they had a passion for music, share some music with someone who could use cheering up. Share the reason for your activity with the people who could benefit.
- Write a letter to your loved one on their birthday or an anniversary date. Share what has been happening since they have been gone. This can be stored and accumulated as the years go by and it may provide a comforting record.

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BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THOSE IN GRIEF

Each person grieves in his or her own way. There is no right or wrong way to do it. Along the way, you may encounter people trying to help. This "bill of rights" is something for you to consider in determining what is and what is not helpful to you.

You have the right to experience your own unique grief. No one else will grieve in exactly the same way you do. No one else can tell you what you should or should not be feeling.

You have the right to talk about your grief. Talking about your grief will help you heal. Seek out others who will allow you to talk as much as you want, and as often as you want, about your grief. There is no time limit on traveling the path of grief.

You have the right to feel a multitude of emotions. Confusion, disorientation, fear, anger, guilt and relief are just a few of the emotions you might feel as part of your grief journey. All of your feelings are valuable and deserve attention. Choose to be around people who will allow you to share them unconditionally and without judging them to be right or wrong, good or bad.

You have the right to be tolerant of your physical and emotional limits. Your feelings of loss and sadness will probably leave you fatigued and drained. Respect what your body and mind is telling you. Get daily rest. Eat balanced meals. Do only what you feel ready for and don't be pressured by others to do things you don't want to.

You have the right to experience grief "attacks." Sometimes, out of nowhere, a powerful surge of grief may overwhelm you. This can be frightening, but is normal and natural. Find someone who understands and will let you talk it out.

You have the right to make use of ritual. Look for ways to memorialize events such as anniversaries, birthdays and holidays. Ritual does more than acknowledge the death of someone loved. It helps provide you with the support of caring people. Ritual is a way for you to mourn. If others tell you that rituals are silly or unnecessary, don't listen.

You have the right to embrace your spirituality. If faith is a part of your life, express it in ways that seem appropriate to you. Allow yourself to be around people who understand and support your religious beliefs. If you feel angry at God, find someone to talk with who won't be critical of your feelings of hurt and abandonment.

You have the right to search for meaning. You may find yourself asking, "Why did he or she die? Why this way? Why now?" Some questions may have answers, but some may not. Watch out for clichéd responses that some people may give you. Comments like, "it was God's will" or "think of what you have to be thankful for" are not always helpful and you do not have to accept them.

You have the right to treasure your memories. Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. You will always remember. Instead of ignoring your memories, find others with whom you can share them.

You have the right to move toward your grief and heal. Reconciling your grief will not happen quickly. Remember that grief is a process, not an event. Be patient and tolerant with yourself. Avoid people who are impatient and intolerant with you. Neither you nor those around you are required to forget that the death of someone loved changes your life forever.

You have the right to laugh and be happy again. As you continue to journey through grief and heal some of the pain that death has brought, your spirit may become lighter and you may find your sense of humor again and find joy in your surroundings. Celebrate these moments!

Adapted from 'The Grieving Person's Bill of Rights' by Alan Wolfelt



BEREAVEMENT AND GRIEF

Bereavement may be a universal experience, but it is one in which most of us feel the least prepared to cope. Many people who are struggling with loss say that no one can fully understand the intensity of another's feelings, but there are ways in which we can be helpful to ourselves and to others in this trying time of life.

- Recognize that there is no one right way to grieve, that "stages" are fluid and not rigid. You may feel the same intensity of the loss on anniversaries, holidays, and special occasions that you felt shortly after the loss.
- Bereavement has no specific duration. In reality we gradually learn to cope more easily as time goes by without forgetting who that person was and what they meant to us.
- To move forward and put our loss behind may not be a realistic or helpful goal. Although painful at first, the connection we feel with the deceased can be a source of comfort and strength. This is especially true for children.
- Reminiscing is a way for bereaved people to feel less disconnected from the loved person. Sharing your memories of the deceased with a bereaved person may be comforting and may open the door for additional memories.
- Being with and talking to others who have experienced a similar loss helps bereaved people recognize that their feelings of loss are normal and universal. Look for a support group offered by an organization with experience and a good history in bereavement support services.
- Intense bursts of feelings of acute grief may occur unexpectedly. This is a normal experience that usually subsides in a short time. Bereaved people may feel discouraged, but this is also a normal part of the grief process.
- People with Alzheimer's or memory loss may have difficulty remembering and processing their feelings of loss. Gently repeating the truth of the loss and being available to comfort allows those individuals the opportunity to grieve. Those individuals may always receive reminders of the death as "new" information.
- Holidays are especially difficult for bereaved people. Choosing alternate plans, letting others know how they can help, getting extra rest, or being intentional about including the memory of the loved person in the celebration are ways some people cope.

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CHILDREN AND GRIEF

If someone close to you has died, this may be an important time to consider the children in your family or acquaintance who may also be affected by the loss. Children have different ways of grieving than adults, and may struggle with their feelings of grief in less than obvious ways. They may appear to misbehave or disobey, or they may become more “controlling” or overly concerned about the well-being of surviving adults in their lives, rather than expressing grief directly with tears and words.

The loss of a parent frequently causes children distress that they are not developmentally able to handle. The surviving parent or other caregiver is faced with his or her own grief as well as the child’s needs. The loss of a sibling may raise feelings of personal vulnerability, survivor guilt, or other complex emotions.

Adolescents have the need to process grief with friends their own age, but may

not have friends who are able to talk about loss.

Children work through their grief in stages, as they are able to develop different levels of the understanding of death. Both the child’s age and the meaning of the lost relationship to them need to be considered. Children may also be very resilient, and able to feel supported by other caring adults in their life.

If a child in your family (or with whom you are acquainted) has lost a significant relationship and needs support, Hospice of Spokane offers “Connections,” a special group for parents and kids, as well as a summer grief camp for children. There is no charge for these groups and they are open to everyone in our community. Individual or family grief counseling is also available to the community-at-large.

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COPING STRATEGIES THROUGHOUT BEREAVEMENT

Find good listeners: Talk and tell your story again and again. Grief support groups are a natural setting. Call us at Hospice of Spokane at (509) 456-0438.

Get accurate information: Even normal grief is confusing and overwhelming, and we all work through it differently. It may be reassuring to share your feelings. Individual counseling may also be helpful. Let us know.

Use the help that is available: Let neighbors, friends, co-workers, and family help. This is an important time to pay attention to your own needs for food, rest, shelter, and to regain a sense of belonging by keeping in touch with others.

Pay attention to your physical well-being: People can experience physical symptoms of grief that include eating and sleeping disturbances. Do not hesitate to see your physician at this time. Some medications can be helpful.

Be physical if you are able: Walking, swimming, sit-and-be-fit exercises, or whatever works for you are all healthy ways to offset the feeling of fatigue and lethargy. Make it a routine if you can.

Keep a balance: Allow some reaction or distraction if you can. You will need to get away from your feelings of loss even for a short time.

Make use of your self-calming mechanisms: Prayer, meditation, journal-writing or music can balance periods of unrest and melancholy.

Acknowledge your feelings whatever they are: Punch pillows if you are angry, write letters to the deceased in times of loneliness, or light a daily memorial candle in memory. Be creative.

You don't have to be strong for others: Even if you are responsible for children or others who need your support, do not ignore your own grief needs. The Hospice of Spokane Bereavement program can be a resource for you and for them.

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COPING WITH ANXIETY AND PANIC

Anxiety and panic can be very frightening emotions, especially if you have not felt them intensely before. It is common for bereaved people to experience new emotions and to feel unsettled. If you feel anxious or panicky, these tips may help you feel better:

- Remember that feelings of panic are just exaggerations of normal bodily stress reactions.
- Sensations are neither harmful nor dangerous—just unpleasant. Nothing worse will happen.
- Anxiety is temporary. Instead of fighting the feelings, relax into them. Just let it be and they will lose their strength.
- Focus on facing the fear rather than trying to avoid or escape from it.
- Stay in the present. Be aware of what is happening to you rather than concerning yourself with how much worse it might get.
- It may take time for the fear to pass. Try your best to be patient with yourself.
- Notice that when you stop adding to panic with frightening thoughts, the fear begins to fade.
- Look around you. Plan what you will do next as the panic subsides.
- When you are ready to go on, do so in an easy, relaxed manner. There is no hurry.
- Think about the progress you've made so far, despite all the obstacles.

Used with permission from Dr. Richard Moser, Psychologist, MeritCare Neuroscience Clinic, Fargo, ND.



COPING WITH GRIEF

- **Grief has no set time.** You will become more comfortable with your loss even though it may feel intolerable at times. Talk is an important healer through the ups and downs.
- **Keep a healthful routine.** As you begin to feel less anxious, your actual sadness may increase which can be exhausting. Be sure you include enough rest, relaxation, nutrition, and good times. Try not to isolate yourself.
- **Find your own pace.** With the best intentions, others may expect you to progress at a faster pace. Don't allow anyone to tell you to forget or to "put your feelings behind you."
- **Share your story.** It is helpful and hopeful to hear and see others in various stages of bereavement. Grief support groups and friends are one way to instill hope.
- **Accept help.** Even though the death was several weeks or months ago, you can still benefit from the kindness of others. Allow them to be there for you.
- **Emotions are emotions, neither good nor bad.** Grievers experience a range of feelings which will come and go, even months after a death. It is only human to feel anger when someone you care about is taken from you. We also experience remorse, guilt, deep longing, and sadness. Talking to a trained bereavement counselor is helpful if you feel "stuck" with some feelings or you have questions about this process.
- **Drugs, alcohol, medications.** Misuse of alcohol and some prescription drugs will not benefit you at this time. There are some appropriate prescription medications which are not addictive and may be helpful if your feelings are overwhelming. Do not hesitate to consult your MD. Individual counseling along with these medications is even more helpful.
- **Allow yourself to experience the pain of loss.** It is human nature to avoid pain, but dealing with difficult emotional issues requires us to recognize loss in its many forms. You have not only lost a loved person, but you may have lost your job as a caregiver, as a friend, parent, or as a child. The list is long and different for each of us. As we gradually adjust to the loss, we will begin to identify secondary losses.
- **Remember to remember.** It is also normal to avoid thinking of the loved one, but now may be time to begin to reminisce about memories of the good times and even the not so good times. Try to remember the person as the real human being they were. Picture albums are helpful and can be comforting.

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GETTING TO SLEEP

Everyone knows how important a good night's sleep is. Sleep restores and prepares our bodies for daytime alertness and better health. The experience of grief often makes it difficult to sleep well, but the following suggestions may help:

- **Exercise daily to promote good sleep.** This releases energy and mental tension. Exercise early, though; late-evening exercise disturbs peaceful sleep.
- **Maintain regular sleep habits.** Get up at the same time each day, no matter how well you have slept. This maintains your internal clock and will result in establishing a fairly regular bedtime.
- **Slow down and unwind before bedtime.** Try pleasure reading, a warm glass of milk, or a relaxing soak in the tub.
- **Your bedroom should be a comfortable resort** for sleeping: dark, cool, quiet.
- **Breathe deeply to induce drowsiness.** Take a series of three very slow, deep breaths, exhaling fully each time. This helps break tension.
- **Accept occasional nights of less sleep.** They're part of life. Although uncomfortable, all of us experience a few nights when sleep is more difficult. If you read Psalm 77, you'll see even the psalmist experienced sleepless nights!
- If you have a **friend or loved one who can offer reassurance**, you may be able to get help on the most difficult evenings by making a short bedtime phone call to her or him.
- **Use relaxation tapes, read a book about progressive relaxation**, and, if all else fails, contact your physician.

What to avoid:

- Don't try to force yourself to sleep. If you can't fall asleep within 15-30 minutes, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy, then return to bed. If you still can't sleep after 15-30 minutes, get up once more, and repeat this pattern until you become sleepy.
- Do not nap during the day. Although naps feel refreshing, they tend to decrease the amount of sleep at night. Stay up until bedtime no matter how tired you feel.
- Don't do strenuous mental or physical activity during the evening. The mind and body need to relax before sleeping.
- Avoid caffeine in the evening. All coffee (even decaffeinated), most teas, colas, and chocolate contain caffeine. (Did you know that it takes three hours for one cup of coffee to leave your system?)
- Avoid smoking before bedtime. Nicotine is a stimulant, and smoker's cough may disrupt sleep.
- Avoid alcohol in the late evening. The sedation tends to wear off in two to three hours and causes disturbed sleep in the latter half of the night.
- Avoid long-term use of sleeping medications. These may cause dependency and can eventually reduce sleep quality.
- Avoid going to bed on an empty stomach, especially if you are dieting. Eat something low in calories to keep your stomach satisfied.
- Try not to take your problems to bed. Try relaxing yourself into sleep with soothing music or pleasant imagery (like walking on the beach or in the woods). Counting sheep is the oldest trick in the book for a simple reason – it works! According to research, this technique distracts both sides of the brain with soothing and repetitive activity. You will literally bore yourself to sleep!

Suggestions adapted from material from the Alabama Society for Sleep Disorders, by Maryann Kaul, R.N., ©1967. Used by permission of the author.



HELPING THOSE CARING FOR DYING LOVED ONES

Caregivers often have trouble knowing what to say or how to act around a loved one once the news of a terminal illness has been learned. It is important hospice professionals help caregivers deal with this unpleasant and awkward situation in the best way possible.

“This fear of not knowing what to say or do can prevent caregivers from giving the love and support the terminally ill need most,” explains Jack Gordon, president of Hospice Foundation of America.

Gordon offers several suggested responses gathered from various sources—including hospice patients—you can relay to caregivers to help them deal with terminally ill loved ones. From their experiences, patients suggest that caregivers:

- Be honest. Patients can tell when feelings or actions are insincere.
- Laugh or cry with the patient as appropriate. Allow them to express intense emotions.
- Don't feel sorry for the patient. The caregiver's understanding helps preserve dignity and pride.
- Touch the patient – he or she wants to be accepted despite the way they may look. Inside, he or she is the same person.
- Let them be silent if they want. Sometimes patients don't have much energy and may just want silent companionship. The caregiver's presence alone can be comforting.
- Let the patient talk about the illness if they so choose. Talking helps to work through feelings.
- Space out visits and calls. Consistent support is very helpful.
- Offer to baby-sit. Children will need a break from the illness, and private time between the patient and his or her spouse is treasured.
- Support the entire family. One person may be very sick, but the entire family is suffering. Let them express their grief as well.
- Offer to help with simple chores. Routine jobs are often difficult for sick patients to accomplish.
- Always continue to be a friend. Don't let illness overshadow all the good times that have passed.

Information provided by Hospice Foundation of America www.hospicefoundation.org

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COPING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS AND MANAGING STRESS

Here are some suggestions to help you deal with your grief:

- Exercising. Take a walk, play a game of golf, or do whatever exercise you enjoy.
- Crying.
- Talking about your feelings with a trusted friend, counselor, or pastor.
- Writing your thoughts on paper and expressing your feelings to the person who died, to a doctor, to God, etc. Then you may choose to destroy your writing or place it in a secure place.
- Praying for the person who died and for yourself in coping with the necessary adjustments in your life.
- Meditating and relaxing. This can offer you a brief respite from your emotions and obsessive thoughts and allow your body to heal.
- Drawing, dancing, singing, or any other type of creative expression. Make up a song and sing it as loud as you can, or paint or color the emotions inside of you.
- Watching a funny movie. This can offer a diversion from your grief work for a while, and laughter allows for the release of tension.
- Thanking your Higher Power for the support you have received, for friends, for books, etc. An attitude of thankfulness can be difficult at the beginning but will be an important aspect of living later.
- Reading about grief and loss.
- Listening to music. This can offer relaxation and comfort; it can be a mood changer.
- Taking a warm bath.
- Getting a massage. It relaxes your body and helps you feel cared for and loved.
- Eating nutritious meals. Sometimes dinner hours are lonely times – share them with a friend.
- Walking in nature. This can soothe the soul as you hear the sounds of life and watch the cycle of the seasons.
- Throwing yourself into a hobby. It helps you take your mind off of your grief work for a while.
- Caring for a pet. They give back unconditional love.
- Limiting the amount of alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs (sleeping pills, tranquilizers, etc.) you consume and the amount of time you watch television.
- Limiting your exposure to pesticides, herbicides, and chemical fertilizers.
- Limiting the amount of sugar, salt, and caffeine you consume.
- Getting adequate sleep.
- Staying hydrated. Drink 6-8 glasses of pure water every day.
- Using good posture with your neck elongated and your head up straight as if there's a hook at the top. Good posture changes your mood and confidence.
- Wearing a smile, even when you don't feel like it can change your mood. You don't have to pretend to be happy, but if you're tired of being sad and need a break, try a smile.



THE ART OF CONSOLING OTHERS

It is very difficult (if not impossible) to take away the pain and grief that someone may feel after losing a loved one. Few words or gestures seem to ease the pain. And, sometimes, awkward gestures and careless expressions can increase the mourner's pain and discomfort. These guidelines can help when attempting to console someone in mourning:

DO

- Be available, listen, and help with routine tasks and chores.
- Experience your own grief and discomfort. Risk sharing those feelings in an appropriate manner.
- Allow the mourner to express their grief without holding back. Listen if they want to talk about the loved one, as much and as often as they want.
- Encourage mourners to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose "should" on themselves.
- Talk about the special endearing characteristics of their loved one.
- Touch and hold the person mourning, when appropriate, in showing emotional support.
- Recognize the importance of self-care beyond the funeral.
- Realize people express their grief in different ways and the amount of time for grieving may vary.
- Be sensitive to the vast cultural and individual differences in the rituals and mourning customs of others. There is no "right" way.

DON'T

- Avoid those who mourn because you are uncomfortable.
- Say you know how they feel.
- Preach or offer spiritual platitudes – especially immediately after a death.
- Say they have grieved long enough and they "ought to feel better by now and get on with their life."
- Change the subject when they mention the loved one's name.
- Worry about mentioning the loved one's name or mentioning things that may remind them of the loved one.
- Try to make light of the loss by mentioning light and casual trivia.
- Try to commiserate with them in blaming someone else for the death.
- Try to explain the death or why it occurred.

Information from "When Death Takes Your Child" by Joel Ward. The Louisville (KY) Courier Journal, July 27, 1980



SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF

THESE ARE ALL NATURAL AND NORMAL GRIEF RESPONSES:

- Tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- An empty feeling in the stomach and loss of appetite or a need to snack often.
- Feeling guilty at times and angry at other times.
- Restlessness and searching for activity, but finding it difficult to concentrate.
- Feeling as though the loss isn't real and expecting to see the one who died.
- Sensing the loved one's presence and talking to him or to her.
- Wandering aimlessly, forgetting things often, and not finishing projects.
- Having difficulty sleeping and feeling exhausted.
- Experiencing an intense preoccupation with the life of the deceased.
- Dreams of the loved one or wanting to dream.
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of their loved one.
- Feeling guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in the relationship of the deceased.
- Feelings of intense anger at the loved one for dying and leaving them.
- Playing and replaying the memories of the last days/weeks/hours or loss of memory of the first days/weeks/hours after knowing of the death.
- Needing to take care of other people who seem uncomfortable around them by politely not talking about their feeling of loss.
- Needing to tell and re-tell stories of the relationship and loss.
- Mood changes.
- Crying at unexpected times.

Any of these symptoms can be a normal part of the grieving process, but if they persist or become very uncomfortable, please make an appointment with your physician and tell her/him that you have experienced a recent major loss.

If you are on medication from your physician, do your best to continue to take it as prescribed. If necessary, use (according to directions and with permission from your physician) pain relievers like aspirin, acetaminophen, and ibuprofen for headaches and aches and pains. Avoid over-the-counter sleeping medications, if possible. They may actually interfere with your sleep and your overall recovery.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WITH EXERCISE AND NUTRITION

Grieving often affects physical well-being. You may not sleep well at night, or you may rerun events in your mind and feel especially tired. Allow yourself the freedom to relax. You have suffered a great shock to your mind, body, and spirit. Physical injury requires rest as an important part of recovery, and emotional injury does too. Your energy will come back in time; now you must take care of yourself.

If several months go by and you still find yourself wanting only to sleep, you should let your pastor, bereavement minister, or physician know.

Exercise

Exercise, besides being great for your physical body, is also a wonderful release for your emotional self. It can allow for the release of emotions such as anger, guilt, anxiety, or restlessness. It will give you more energy. Researchers have proved that exercise can temporarily relieve mild depression and improve mood. You may find that although you have been used to an active routine, just getting out of bed in the morning seems like a heroic act. Do whatever you can. If you haven't been active, don't push yourself into a vigorous exercise program. Take walks regularly, or simply move your arms and legs while seated.

Nutrition

Eating right may seem like a hard thing to do. You may have lost your appetite and even your interest in preparing food. These few suggestions may help:

- Take people up on their offer to go out to eat.
- Take a multi-vitamin daily. It can't replace a well-rounded diet, but it can fill in some of the gaps temporarily.
- Eat with the TV or radio on, if it offers company to you. Set a pretty table, and make your meal as colorful and appealing as you can.
- Eat extra foods high in protein to help your body heal itself.
 - Increase daily protein intake by adding one extra glass of milk or one extra serving of 3-4 oz. meat, cheese, or peanut butter.
 - Most microwavable entrees include 3-4 oz. meat. If you need to watch your fat, Healthy Choice, Lean Cuisine, and Weight Watchers are good choices.
 - Snacks like peanut butter or cheese on crackers or bread can substitute for one ounce of meat.
 - Add ¼ cup nonfat powdered milk to soups, casseroles, etc., to increase protein.
 - Follow the USDA food pyramid for daily healthy eating.

Suggestions courtesy of Linda Aamold, LRD at MerilCare Hospital in Fargo, North Dakota.

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