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GRIEF *Matters*

Compassionate support through the first year of grief

9 MONTHS AFTER LOSS

Around nine months after loss, you've passed the halfway point of your first year of grief. You're a lot closer to the first anniversary of your loss than the start of your grief journey, but not quite at that big milestone just yet. By now, enough time has passed that most others have moved on—but grief may still be a frequent guest in your life.

Grief experts say that the six-month mark is the emotional peak for many people, like the highest point of a mountain hike. Now, you might be heading downhill, but there is still a long journey ahead. Your day-to-day might feel easier than before, but you are exhausted and tired of hiking. And yet, you must go on.

Now is also a time when many people start looking ahead to the future more often than they think about the past. This newsletter invites you to reflect on how far you've come and prepare for what's ahead.

“Grief can be a burden, but also an anchor. You get used to the weight, how it holds you in place.”

—Sarah Dessen, The Truth About Forever



Looking ahead

Set new goals. Reflecting on how your loss has changed you—your sense of self, your values, and the way you see the world—can be an important part of healing. As the one-year mark approaches, notice how these changes might guide your next steps.

Use some of the prompts below to write in a journal, post on social media, create art, or do anything that helps you express your feelings. Thinking about these questions can help you set goals and define what healing looks like for you moving forward.

- **What brings me peace and purpose, or what do I want to focus on more in the future?**
- **What personal strengths have I discovered on this grief journey?**
- **How do I want to grow emotionally, spiritually, or creatively?**
- **What routines or practices have been helpful, and how can I keep them going?**
- **What relationships do I want to keep going or reconnect with?**
- **What new goals, big or small, do I feel ready to set?**
- **How can I honor my loved one as I move forward?**

Remember, this is not a to-do list that *must* be done. Think of your goals as gentle reminders of intentions you are setting for yourself. **Talk about this with your support network**—friends, family, therapists, or care teams—so they can give you help and support when you need it.

Plan for important dates. Ahead of the first anniversary of your loss, make a plan for how you want to spend the day. Planning for this big milestone by thinking through what might bring you calm, peace, or joy can give you a sense of control. This also applies to birthdays, holidays, other anniversaries, and any dates that were important to you or the person who died.

Above all, try to avoid drifting into the day without support or direction. Unstructured time on painful days can lead to more stress and unhealthy coping. Even a basic plan like setting time for rest, connection, or self-care can make a difference.

Questions to help you plan ahead:

- **Would you prefer to be alone**, have company, or a mix of both? (*Continued on next page*)

EMOTIONAL SCARS: COMPOUNDING TRAUMAS

You may have a more intense grief reaction to this loss if you've had past traumas such as other losses, a difficult childhood, existing mood or anxiety disorders, or being part of a traumatic event. This is especially true if the earlier traumas were never fully processed and healed.

Just like physical wounds, emotional wounds leave scars. Some fade over time. Some remain tender. When a new wound appears, like the death of someone important to you, it can reopen or worsen the old wounds, causing more pain than expected.

Now, you might find yourself overwhelmed—grieving this new loss while also feeling the ache of past pain coming back. It's a lot to carry, and it can make your new grief journey very hard to handle.

If you have compounding traumas, the basics of the

grieving process are the same: Feel your feelings. Find healthy ways to express them. Don't hide from your feelings or numb your pain with unhealthy habits. Your emotions may be intense, but you *can* survive them.

There may have been good reasons you avoided past pain until now. Facing it today, with support, can open the door to deeper healing. If it feels like too much to sort through alone, seeking help from a therapist—especially one trained in grief or trauma—can provide a safe space to unpack your feelings and help you find a way forward.

There is strength and bravery in taking that first step to reach out for help. **Contact us if you need a referral or extra support.**

- **What rituals or traditions do you want to keep** or start in their honor?
- **What would feel most comforting that day?**
Easy ideas include resting, taking a quiet walk, lighting a candle, or visiting a peaceful place.
- **Consider including other people** who were close to the person in the plans for extra support and connection. You could:
 - Share a meal together
 - Visit the person's resting place
 - Look through photos or tell stories
 - Do an activity that the person enjoyed
 - Share a social media post or text each other memories of the person

In some cases, you may be the only one who carries the memory closely—or maybe it was a difficult relationship, and you don't want to carry the memory at all. That doesn't make your grief less real. Create a plan that feels personally meaningful, whether you spend the day quietly reflecting, doing something symbolic, or connecting with loved ones.

Keep riding the waves. As your grief journey progresses, you may begin to have more good days again. But waves of grief can still appear, and some days may feel just as overwhelming as they did months ago. Be patient with yourself during the hard moments, and turn to the healthy coping outlets that work best for you.

On good days, lean into feelings like joy, peace, or happiness. Making the most of the good days can help you get through the hard ones. Try some of the following tips to support yourself:

- **Name your waves.** If a strong wave of grief hits, label what you're feeling: anger, guilt, joy, loneliness, etc. Naming the feeling can help you acknowledge and process it.

“Somewhere down the line, and it's different for everybody, you find that the waves are only 80 feet tall...And while they still come, they come further apart.

“You can see it coming, for the most part, and prepare yourself. And when it washes over you, you know that somehow you will, again, come out the other side. Soaking wet, sputtering, still hanging on to some tiny piece of the wreckage, but you'll come out.”

—G. Snow

- **Do a daily emotional check-in.** Every day, try to stop and ask yourself: *How do I feel right now? What do I need? What feels manageable today?*
- **Practice soothing rituals.** Calming activities such as a daily walk, a cup of tea, writing in a journal, or lighting a candle can bring peace and comfort.
- **Make room for joy without guilt.** Smiling, laughing, or feeling excitement is not dishonoring the person's memory. Quite the opposite—if they loved you, they would want you to be happy.
- **Keep a “memory touchpoint.”** Whether it's a photo, a piece of jewelry, a quote they loved written on a small paper, or any other memento, having a small item that keeps their memory close can be grounding on both good and bad days.
- **Connect with others.** When you're ready, talk about your grief with a trusted friend, a support group, or a therapist. Sharing can lighten the weight you're carrying.

Although you will never fully “get over” this loss, you may be learning how to grow around your grief. Over time, you might begin to see a future where your life and your loss can exist together.

Remember, our care team is here for you if you need a listening ear, resources, or guidance as you continue on your grief journey. Contact us anytime you need support.



We're here for you.

We provide grief support services to families up to 13 months after a loss, but you don't have to receive hospice services to receive grief support. Our programs are available to *all* members of our community. Contact us for more information.

1-800-123-4567 | info@domain.com

Your custom content here.

Add a message from administration or the bereavement team, upcoming events, support group schedules, photos, and more. Or submit artwork for the full back page ad: 8" x 10.5" print area. Graphic design services are available for \$60/hour.

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