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GRIEF *Matters*

Compassionate support through the first year of grief

1 YEAR AFTER LOSS

If you're reading this, you may be nearing or have just passed a big milestone: the first anniversary of your loss. Similar feelings that came up at six months might be coming up again: *"How did I survive a whole year already?"* And maybe at the same time, *"It's only been a year? It feels like I've been grieving forever!"*

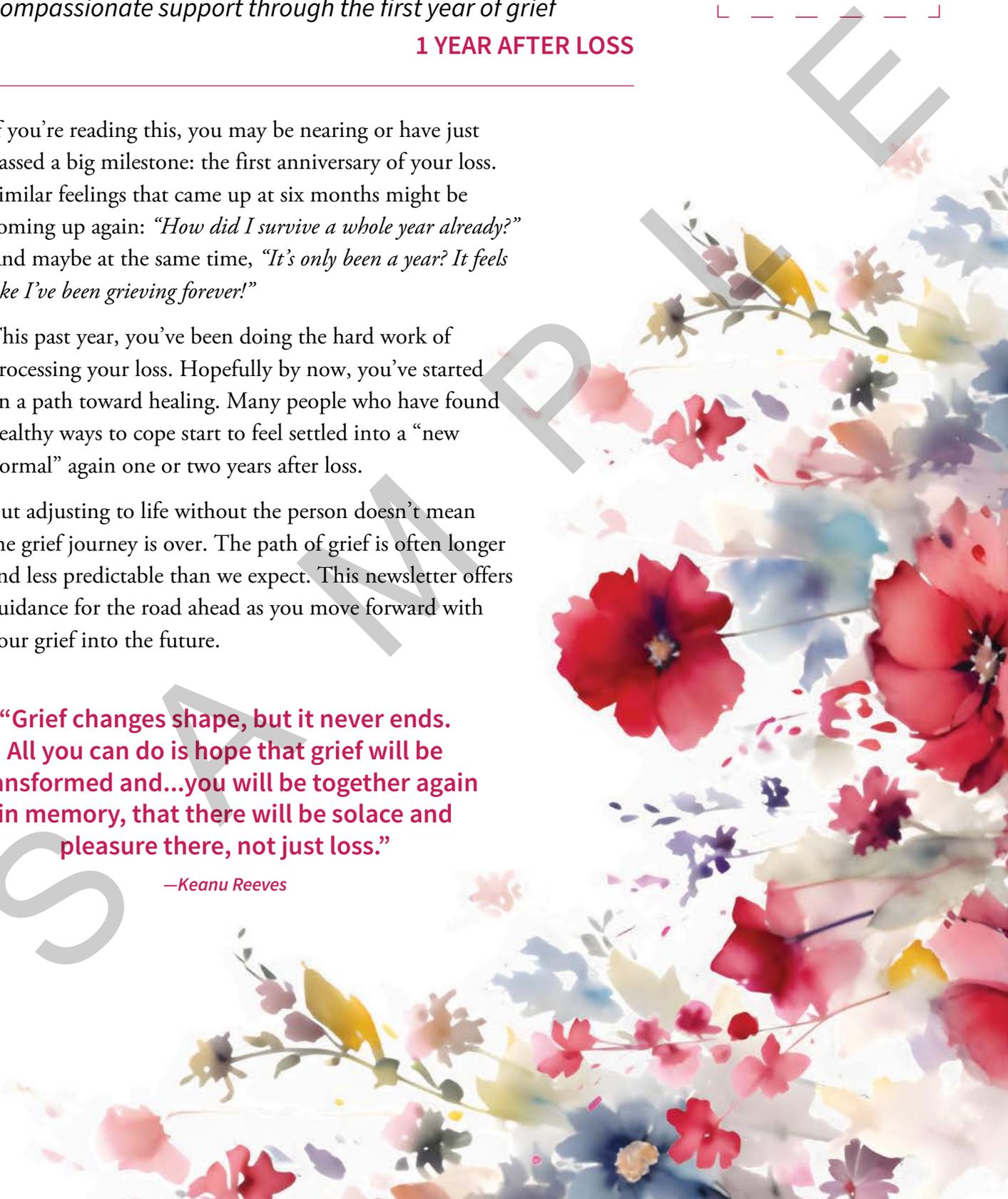
This past year, you've been doing the hard work of processing your loss. Hopefully by now, you've started on a path toward healing. Many people who have found healthy ways to cope start to feel settled into a "new normal" again one or two years after loss.

But adjusting to life without the person doesn't mean the grief journey is over. The path of grief is often longer and less predictable than we expect. This newsletter offers guidance for the road ahead as you move forward with your grief into the future.

**"Grief changes shape, but it never ends.
All you can do is hope that grief will be
transformed and...you will be together again
in memory, that there will be solace and
pleasure there, not just loss."**

—Keanu Reeves

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What to expect

As you may have guessed, grief doesn't magically stop at the one-year mark. It will continue to show up in your life in different ways. Over time, you can learn to live with it and even grow around it. Below are some things people experience as they move forward in their grief journeys. Remember that your journey is unique, so don't worry if these don't apply to you.

Feelings to revisit and process: As you approach this anniversary, you may feel old emotions coming back—or new ones surfacing that you didn't have a chance to process earlier in the year. You might:

- **Feel angry** again about the circumstances around the loss or at the people who were involved
- **Be overwhelmed** by the realization that you are not done grieving
- **Feel waves of sadness** when coming across reminders you thought you'd gotten used to
- **Have fresh guilt** over things in the past, things left unsaid, or things you didn't do

This isn't a setback. It's the natural way grief unfolds. Use this anniversary of your loss to check in with your feelings. **Note your symptoms in a journal, grief assessment, or simply reflect on them.**

Acknowledging your emotions can help you process grief. Consider talking to a trusted care team member, friend, family member, or counselor.

Fewer people talk about your loved one: Early in grief, friends and family may have checked in with you to ask how you were doing. They may have wished you strength and peace as you got through those days without the person. Now, they may not reach out as often—or maybe not at all.

It's normal for outside support to taper off after the first few months and continue to lessen over time. Though you know your friends and family still care, this can still make you feel hurt and alone.

As you heal from loss, you may start to wish other people would talk about the person who died more. Don't be afraid to start the conversation. Once you do, you might find a lot of people are happy to join. Some ideas include:

- **Bring your loved one up** when you're talking to people who knew them. You could start with, *"I was just thinking about the time [Name]..."*
- **Ask people to share photos or memories** of your loved one via text or on social media. You can use anniversaries, holidays, and special days as prompts: *"For [Name]'s birthday, I'd love to hear your favorite memory of them."*
- **Invite friends and family to a gathering** (a meal, an activity, a birthday party, etc.) to celebrate the person together.

Confusion, guilt, or fear about "moving on":

As you grow around your loss, grief will eventually feel smaller and more manageable. You may have more joyful moments, laugh more, or even have the same love for new people that you had for the person who died.

These emotions may make you feel guilty or like you're doing something wrong. But they are not a sign that you're "moving on" or forgetting your loved one. All of these feelings are normal. You are continuing to grow and have new experiences—and that's a good thing!

If you're worried about forgetting or dishonoring your loved one's memory, remember that they played a role in shaping the person you are, so they will always be a part of you. You can remember and honor them by living your life joyfully and to the fullest.

Stepping into the future

This year, you have faced pain, made big changes, and found ways to cope through the hardest days. Even when you struggled, you kept going. Trust the work you've done; it all counts. If you've let yourself feel your feelings, you've built a good foundation to support you moving forward. So when fresh waves of grief come, remember that you've done hard things—and you can do them again.

Review the five tasks of grief:

- **Accepting the reality of the loss**
- **Processing the pain of grief**
- **Adjusting to the world without the person**
- **Finding ways to honor the person and maintain an enduring connection**
- **Seeking out new activities and relationships and planning for the future**

You may have moved past some tasks or still be working on others—there's no set deadline or order. Thinking about which tasks you're dealing with now can help you see where you are in your grief journey. You can also try the reflection activity below.

Growth after loss: For many who have suffered a loss, new strength, perspective, purpose, or even positive change can quietly grow over time. This is known as post-traumatic growth (PTG). Maybe your grief journey has helped you to:

- **Appreciate life more deeply**
- **Form closer relationships**
- **Find resilience or spiritual growth**
- **Know your values and what truly matters**
- **Help others in meaningful ways**

In what ways has your grief journey helped you grow? Growth after loss is not required—it's simply a wonderful possibility. If in moments of reflection you find that grief has shaped you into someone deeper, softer, stronger, or more awake to life, know that this, too, is part of your journey.

Continuing your grief journey: As you continue on your path, remember that you are not alone. While many bereavement programs offer structured support for at least 13 months after a patient's death, that doesn't mean your grief or access to support ends there. Our care team can still offer referrals, resources, and guidance.

ONE-YEAR REFLECTION QUESTIONS

As your grief continues to evolve, these questions can help you note your progress and areas where you feel stuck. You can do this activity in writing, by talking with someone you trust, or by thinking about your answers.

- **What has changed most for me since my loss?** These could be emotional, practical, financial, social, or spiritual changes.
- **What coping strategies have helped me the most?** Are there healthy routines or practices that work well for you?
- **What strengths have I discovered in myself over the past year?** Think about moments of resilience, vulnerability, or courage.
- **Which of the five tasks of grief (see above) have I worked through,** even if only briefly?
- **Where do I feel stuck,** hesitant, or overwhelmed? Gently notice without judgment or guilt.
- **What do I need more of right now?** Support, rest, connection, permission to feel your feelings? Who or what can you turn to moving forward? Think of people, places, or activities that help you feel centered and secure.

Asking for support at *any* point in your grief journey is not a sign of weakness. Acknowledge your progress and move forward at your own pace. Contact us if 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

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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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