

## GRIEF ATTACKS

You may now feel like daily routines are more manageable, and grief is a bit lighter. There might be more good days than bad—even moments of peace or joy. But it's also normal for big waves of grief to still catch you off guard.

**What is a grief attack?** A grief attack is a sudden, strong wave of sadness, tearfulness, longing, or any other feeling of grief. They can hit you at moments you'd expect, like when you come across these common triggers:

- **Favorites (music, food, movies, etc.)**
- **Milestones, anniversaries, holidays**
- **Scents and smells**
- **Quiet moments of reflection**
- **Seeing a person who looks like them**
- **Anything that brings up a memory**

Grief attacks can also hit you when you don't expect them at all. Having a grief attack doesn't mean something is wrong with you. This is a normal, healthy part of the grieving process.

### What you can do during a grief attack

- **Name your feelings.** Say aloud, write down, or think to yourself: *"I'm feeling really [sad/angry/afraid/etc]. This is grief. My body and mind are reacting to these feelings. This feeling will pass. I am safe. I will be okay."*
- **Take slow, deep breaths** to calm your nervous system. Take a walk, stretch, or do light exercise to help release the emotional energy.
- **Seek comfort.** Wrap yourself in a soft blanket, drink a warm beverage, take a warm bath or shower, light a scented candle, or hold a calming object.
- **Reach out to someone you trust** by phone or text to feel connected. Even a social media post can help you feel a little less alone.
- **Let yourself cry when you can.** Tears are not a sign of weakness, but a healthy release that can help reduce stress. If you can't cry in the moment, take time to cry or process those feelings later when it feels safe.

**Grief attacks do not take away from your progress.** In time, they'll be easier to handle—but there's always a chance they'll resurface. When they do, let them pass, acknowledge your feelings without judgment, and keep pushing forward.

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## HONORING YOUR LOVED ONE

There are simple ways to honor loved ones on special days, such as lighting a candle, playing their favorite music, telling their story, or eating their favorite food. These small rituals aren't just for holidays or anniversaries; they're easy ways to keep your loved one's memory present every day.

On big milestones, like the first anniversary of your loss, you may feel called to honor your loved one in more significant ways. As you carry memories of the person, you also have the chance to create *new* memories that include them—even after they're gone. Some ideas for lasting memorials:

- **Planting a perennial flower**, a tree, or tending a special houseplant or a memorial garden
- **Donating to their favorite charity**, starting a fundraiser in their honor, collecting donations for their school, or setting up a scholarship fund in their name at their alma mater
- **Organizing a volunteer event** for a cause that was important to them, such as a park clean-up, pet adoption, food/clothing/book drive, etc.
- **Creating a remembrance item**, like a memory box, scrapbook, collage, keepsake quilt, recipe collection, etc.
- **Recording a video or audio tribute** on your own or with others; search online for free platforms (for example, StoryCorps Connect) to archive and share with friends and family

Finding unique ways to honor the person can be comforting and give you a sense of purpose. Activities like these also allow your loved one's name to live on, not just in your heart, but out in the world. Inviting friends, family, and your community to help plan or participate can provide support and connection.

The grief and love you carry are *yours*, and so is how you choose to express and celebrate them. **Just like there is no wrong way to grieve, there is no wrong way to honor a life. However you choose to do it, let it be meaningful to you.**

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## FADING MEMORIES, LASTING BONDS

You might be afraid you're forgetting the person when your memories of them start to fade. It's normal for details to blur as time goes on—the way their voice sounded, their laugh, their quirks, the way they smelled.

**Be gentle with yourself if you begin to forget things.** Even if you can't remember every detail about them, your love will always live on. Maintain your connection by looking at photos, talking about the person, setting out flowers, visiting a special place, or trying a remembrance ritual alone or with loved ones.

**Remembrance ritual:** This candlelighting ceremony is a way to honor the person while reflecting on your journey. Use real or LED candles, set stones in a pattern, release flowers in water, or do whatever feels right for you.

- 1. Prepare.** Gather any supplies, pictures, or mementos you'd like to include. Think about or write down what each candle (or item) will represent.
- 2. Open the ritual.** In a quiet, calm space, take a moment of silence, then say, "We light these candles in honor of [the person]."
- 3. Light each candle** and say out loud what the candle represents. Ideas for what to say are below, or say anything you wish.
- 4. Close the ritual.** Let the candles burn for as long as you want (never leave a burning candle alone), then blow out the candles with a wish, blessing, or just say, "We love you."

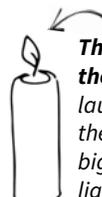
**The first candle is for grief.** The pain of loss is deep, but it reflects the depth of our love. As we light it, we remember.



**The second candle is for the courage** to face sorrow, comfort each other, and keep moving forward. As we light it, we remember.



**The third candle is for the memories,** every laugh and tear, for all the shared moments, big and small. As we light it, we remember.



**The fourth candle is for love.** You'll always hold a place in our hearts, and our lasting bonds hold strong. As we light it, we remember.



**The last candle is for hope, peace, and gratitude.** We will honor you by living a full, joyful life. Thank you for all you shared. As we light it, we remember.



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