



DAYBREAK

In touch during a time of grief

Make Every Day Count

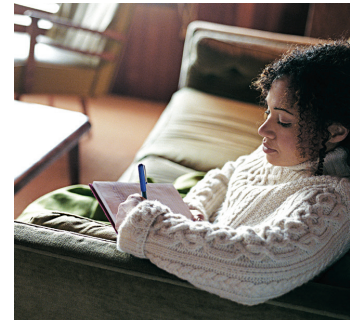
*In **Make Every Day Count**, persons who have lost a loved one share their experiences. This month, Carol C. reflects on how she used journal-writing to express her feelings during the difficult first year after her husband died.*

“I was brought up to appreciate the gesture of actually sitting down and writing letters to people. But in the last ten years or so, I had gotten out of the habit. After my husband’s funeral, I put aside some of the nice notes I had gotten and I jotted down some of the kind things people said to me. That got my writing started, and before long I began to use a journal to express everything. I used it to make grocery lists and lists of household chores, as well as to express my sadness and write down special memories. The thing I liked best about the journal was that it was a time when I was alone with my thoughts. I allowed myself to drift back in time and remember happy days, and even other painful times. Sometimes I tried writing poems. Other times I jotted down words to songs my husband and I liked. Keeping a journal helped me find a place for my very private painful thoughts. It also gave me an outlet for my feelings. I still write in my journal. As my grief has become less painful, it is still a way for me to stay in touch with my feelings.”

Journaling an Outlet for Your Grief...

Losing someone you love is the most stressful experience you will ever endure. During this time, it is important for you to have outlets to express your feelings. Talking with your friends and family is one way for you to share your feelings. Journal writing is another. In fact, many studies have shown that journaling during the bereavement process results in many benefits, including an increased sense of well-being and a reduction in the physical symptoms caused by stress.

Journal writing forces you to look inward, to really think about how you are responding to the change in your life. In the last few months, you have probably experienced a range of emotions, including anger, sadness, loneliness, fear and helplessness. Putting words on paper through regular journaling allows you to express those feelings instead of holding them inside. Journaling provides a “time out,” a break from the stresses imposed by the outside world. It is a solitary activity...one that invites you to take time for yourself.



Getting Started

Don’t get hung up on the materials. You don’t need a fancy, leather-bound journal. Any notebook will do. Nowadays, many people find it easier to express their thoughts on a computer. Whatever your method, the goal is simple. Find a way to regularly spend time on journaling.

continued on back

Should I Share?

You might choose to share portions of your journal entries with family, friends or your bereavement support group. It's up to you. Just keep in mind that you make the decision what to share and what to keep private. Don't censor yourself...that will decrease the benefits that journaling brings.

What Should I Write About?

Often, people say they can't get started. They sit with a pen poised over a blank journal page and wonder, 'Now what?' Following are some ideas that can help you:

Lists. Start by making a list of the things you miss about your loved one, or the qualities you would most like to remember.

Memories. Think of a holiday, anniversary or vacation and write about a special memory that you associate with those occasions. Are there special anecdotes or memories of your loved one that you want to share with children or grandchildren? Your journal writing is a great way to begin that process.

Unsent letters. Grieving persons often agonize about the things they wished they had said or done while their loved one was still alive. Writing an unsent letter in your journal is a powerful way to put those thoughts to rest. Say what needs to be said so your heart can heal.

A Tip List to Get You Started

Get started on your journal by writing a special message to your loved one. Begin by completing the following...

- A special memory that I have about you...
- What I miss the most about you and our life together...
- I wish I had told you...
- What I'd like to ask you...
- One thing I wish we had done...
- You will live on in me through...
- I will keep your memory alive by...



We Are Here To Help

It's important to talk about your loss with compassionate friends and family. Many people also seek the comfort of support groups during this difficult time. The Daybreak Bereavement Program, provided by the hospice services of Advocate Aurora Health at Home, offers a wide range of opportunities for individual or group support. For more information, or talk to a bereavement counselor, please contact:

- Illinois 800-813-5185
- Wisconsin 800-862-2201