30-DAY Journal

Grief is a Journey

Get Started on the Path toward Healing

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If you have opened this journal, you've lost someone you love, and that is perhaps the most difficult thing we face in life. This journal is designed to help you find peace and comfort as you work through your grief feelings and find a way to move forward after loss.

Each day will include a writing prompt or activity suggestion tailored to help you engage with your thoughts and feelings. It's up to you how much you engage with the content, but the more effort you put in, the greater the benefit to you. May your journey through these pages bring you a peace you didn't expect and a greater closeness to your loved one's memory.

Embracing the Pain of Grief

Grief is an inescapable part of life. And with it comes a variety of emotions – sadness, anger, regret, guilt, disbelief, shock. No matter what you're experiencing, you must face those feelings before you can move forward on the path toward healing. This doesn't mean you will forget your loved one or "get over" the loss; it simply means you will find a way to move forward, embrace joy, and honor your loved one's life as you continue to live yours.

Honoring the Pain of Grief

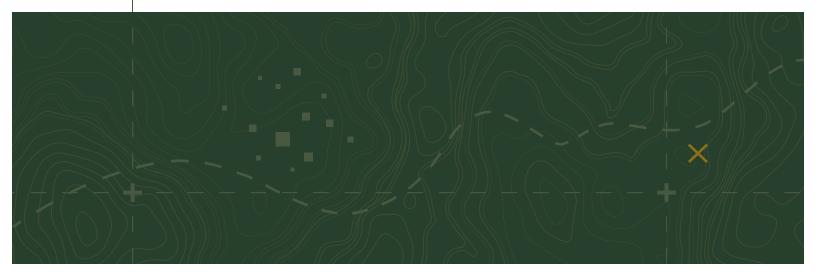
Dr. Alan Wolfelt, a nationally respected grief counselor and educator, puts it this way:

From my own experiences with loss as well as those of thousands of grieving people I have companioned over the years, I have learned that you cannot go around the pain of your grief. Instead, you must open to the pain. You must acknowledge the inevitability of the pain. You must gently embrace the pain. You must honor the pain.

"What?" you naturally protest. "Honor the pain?"

As crazy as it may sound, your pain is the key that opens your heart and ushers you on your way to healing. Honoring means recognizing the value of and respecting. It is not instinctive to see grief and the need to openly mourn as something to honor; yet the capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn. To honor your grief is not self-destructive or harmful, it is self-sustaining and life-giving.

Your grief is the result of an injury to your spirit. Now you must attend to your injury. As human beings, we possess deep, complex, multi-faceted emotions, and it's our responsibility to learn how we individually need to process those emotions. If you are facing a season of grief – whether you've lost someone you loved or are experiencing some other pain – keeping a grief journal might be the answer to helping you cope with and process your feelings.



5 Reasons Why A GRIEF JOURNAL CAN HELP

As Dr. Wolfelt said, a grief journal may be the answer to helping you cope with and process your feelings. There are several key reasons why a grief journal is a proven method for helping people work through their feelings of grief.

Writing things down can often make you more aware of what you are feeling. For some people, they don't know what they are feeling until they write it down. Putting thoughts and emotions into words forces you to slow down and gives you an opportunity to deeply reflect on, and perhaps better understand, the emotions within you. It's a method of self-reflection and can reveal things you haven't consciously thought about.

Journaling is an opportunity to remember your loved one. Recall your favorite memories. Record their favorite colors, smells, foods, places. Write down what they meant to you and why. A grief journal gives you a safe and judgment-free place to explore your jumbled thoughts and feelings, to find ways to remember your loved one, and to record your ongoing journey through grief. Often, it's comforting to look back and see just how far you've come from day one.

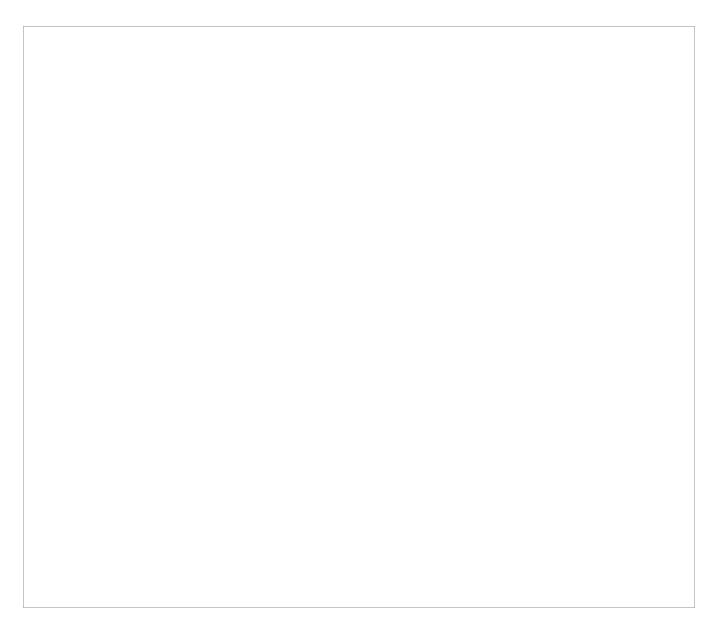
There are no rules. This journal belongs to you, and you can utilize it in whatever way you see fit. There may be days when you don't feel like writing. That's okay – you can also draw, color, paint, glue, or create something else in the journal's pages. It's entirely up to you – it's your space.

Journaling can improve physical and emotional health. By putting your thoughts and feelings into words, they come into sharper focus, and you can outwardly express what you inwardly feel. Among other things, this outward expression, this releasing of thoughts and emotions, reduces stress and improves sleep.

Write what comes out and don't be ashamed of it. Some of the things you feel may be unexpected or scary, and that's normal. Giving voice to your feelings will help you identify them, take responsibility for them, and eventually, release them.

PRE-EXERCISE: How are You Feeling Right Now?

Before you get started, it's good practice to measure where you are right now, at the very beginning of the journey. In this space, draw a picture that represents how you are feeling at this moment. We're not all artists, so stick figures are fine, but if you'd prefer, you can write out how you feel today.



GRIEF IS A JOURNEY

A 30-day journal to get you started on the path toward healing Today, I am really missing...

DAY 1

"But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man [or woman] had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer."

VIKTOR E. FRANKL

A comforting memory of my loved one is...

DAY 2

"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die." THOMAS CAMPBELL

One feeling that's showing up a lot lately is...

DAY 3

"Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak whispers the o're-fraught heart, and bids it break." WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Write down a list of people you can turn to for support, either in person or virtually. Have you talked with them about what you're feeling?

"Grieving doesn't make you imperfect. It makes you human." SARAH DESSEN

Something I wish I'd told my loved one is...

DAY 5

"What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes part of us."

HELEN KELLER

For me, the hardest time of day is...

"Today was a difficult day. Tomorrow will be better." KEVIN HENKES

Grief is hard on the mind and body. Is your body reacting to your grief? What are you experiencing?

"I don't know why they call it heartbreak. It feels like every part of my body is broken too." CHLOE WOODWARD

Create a photo collage with some of your favorite photos and use one word to describe why you love each one.

"Never. We never lose our loved ones. They accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives. We are merely in different rooms."

PAULO COELHO

Write down 5 self-care activities that make you feel good, even in the hard times.

"In the beginning, we focus on the pain. We only see the loss. Taking care of yourself is imperative for the grief process. Mind, body, soul - all need extra care to help with the journey ahead. It's not selfish, it's essential."

DANIELLE SIMPSON

What is one thing you could do to make today easier on yourself?

"Choose your thoughts wisely. Be kind to yourself and reflect on the loss with love." LOUISE HAY AND DAVID KESSLER

My loved one and I didn't always agree. Something we didn't see eye to eye on was...

"In every heart there is an inner room, where we can hold our greatest treasures and our deepest pain."

MARIANNE WILLIAMSON

Write down 5 things about your loved one that make you happy. Why do these things bring you joy?

> "When someone you love becomes a memory, that memory becomes a treasure." AUTHOR UNKNOWN

I can honor my loved one's life and memory by ...

"Our grief is as individual as our lives." ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS

Name 3 places you can go to feel close to your loved one. Why are these places so meaningful?

> "In the garden of memory, in the palace of dreams...that is where you and I shall meet." LEWIS CARROLL

Your loved one was an entirely unique person and who they are matters. Complete this page to remember them.

Strengths	*	Hobbies	2	Accomplishments	
Weaknesses		Closest Friends	ţ	Quirks	Q

"Wherever a beautiful soul has been, there is a trail of beautiful memories." RONALD REAGAN

Did you have any unresolved conflicts with your loved one? Write them out here.

> "Forgiveness is the greatest gift you can give yourself." MAYA ANGELOU

How did your loved one make you feel? Bonus: draw a picture below that depicts this feeling.

"Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them."

LEO TOLSTOY

Often, people keep an item with special meaning or significance. What keepsake item(s) do you have from your loved one?

"Some things cannot be fixed; they can only be carried. Grief like yours, love like yours, can only be carried."

MEGAN DEVINE

What creative ways do you use to express your feelings (drawing, writing, woodwork, etc.)? If you don't have any, are there any you'd like to try?

"Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim."

VICKI HARRISON

Write down something significant your loved one did for you and why it means so much.

"There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love."

WASHINGTON IRVING

Select a word that describes how you feel today. Why do you feel this way?

"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." MATTHEW 5:4

What songs, movies, items, or foods remind you of your loved one? Why do they remind you?

> "Your memory feels like home to me. So, whenever my mind wanders, it always finds its way back to you." RANATA SUZUKI

What is your loved one's favorite holiday? How can you celebrate and remember them on that day?

"Death ends a life, not a relationship. All the love you created is still there. All the memories are still there. You live on — in the hearts of everyone you have touched and nurtured while you were here."

MITCH ALBOM

What have you felt most afraid of since your loved one died?

"No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." C.S. LEWIS

One thing my loved one taught me that I'll never forget is...

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." A.A. MILNE, The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh

I feel most connected to my loved one when...

"We need never be afraid of our own tears." CHARLES DICKENS

Is there anything you need to forgive yourself or your loved one for?

"When a deep injury is done to us, we never heal until we forgive." NELSON MANDELA

There will still be tough days ahead. Write expressions/phrases that give you courage. Return to them when you feel overwhelmed.

"You will survive, and you will find purpose in the chaos. Moving on doesn't mean letting go." MARY VANHAUTE

You drew a picture at the very beginning of this journal. Consider how you feel today and draw a new picture or write how you are feeling.

"I know now that we never get over great losses; we absorb them, and they carve us into different, often kinder, creatures."

GAIL CALDWELL

Use this final space to write a letter to your loved one saying all the things you left unsaid or wish you could have said one more time.

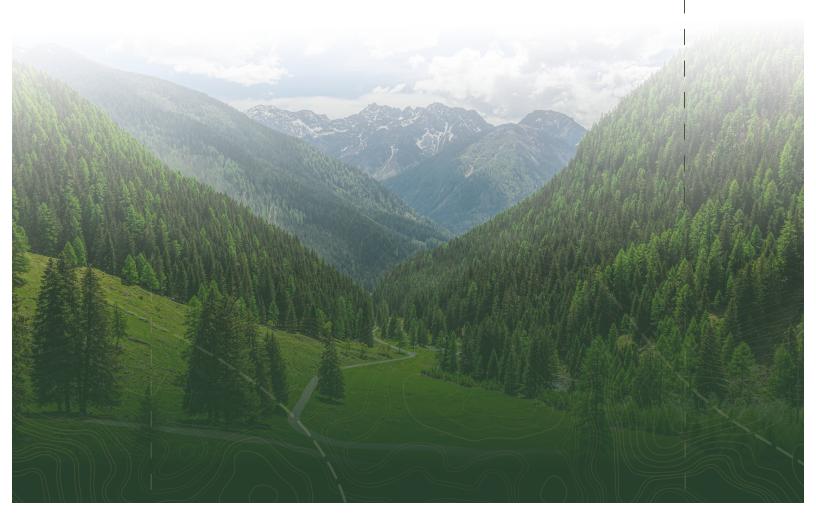
"Grief is like nothing else, with the possible exception of the pounding waves of the ocean. To the untrained, casual eye, each wave looks the same. It is not. No two are the same. And each one washes away the old, and washes in the new. Gradually, almost imperceptibly, whether we believe it or not, we are being transformed."

MELODY BEATTIE

The grief journey doesn't end here.

There's no specific timeline for grief. For some, it takes weeks, and for others, years. No matter where you're at, if this exercise has been helpful, keep journaling. Keep working through your feelings and emotions. It will help, and you will find a way to move forward.

Best wishes on the journey toward healing and finding renewed hope in life!





"The reality is that you will grieve forever. You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it. You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered. You will be whole again, but you will never be the same. Nor should you be the same nor would you want to."

ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS





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Planning a funeral is a very personal task, and it is important that you have the information you need to make educated decisions. For more information on the basics of funeral planning, go to **www.funeralbasics.org**.