



# **The Journey Through Grief**

Your hope for healing is here.

# Let's Talk About It

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Grief is one of the heart's natural responses to loss. When we grieve we allow ourselves to feel the truth of our pain, the measure of loss in our life. By our willingness to mourn, we slowly acknowledge, integrate, and accept the truth of our losses.

## In this book you will learn about:

- It takes courage to grieve, to honour the pain we carry.
- We can grieve in many ways, and in touching the pain of recent and long-held griefs, we come face to face with our genuine human vulnerability, with helplessness and hopelessness. These are the storm clouds of the heart.
- Grief is very individual. This book is filled with ideas that can help you through your own grief journey. This does not mean that you will connect with everything or anything that is written in this book and that is ok too.



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## You've already come so far

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Just by identifying your grief, you've already completed a big step in this journey. What you're feeling is normal. There is no time line on grief, no set destination. Getting through grief is about a hope for healing. It's never about how or when to feel certain things.

It's ok to feel hopeless at points in the journey as well. Maybe a certain thing you are trying is not working, consider trying a different technique in this resource. A step in a different direction.

At the end of this book, we've included advice from our grief group participants. They have, and are, travelling through grief. They know that grief is unique to everyone, and hope that sharing what helped them might help you.

"Make a decision to change your thoughts."

*-Griever's Advice*

This book compiles many tools and resources to help you along your journey through grief. You are unique, as is your loss, and the way you are journeying through your loss. Everyone's path is different, and it's bound to change along the way.

Consider reading through this resource, and trying a couple of the approaches that speak to you.



## Mediation

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### Go within to find meaning.

Meditation can remove stress and replace it with a dose of inner peace. It's one of the best tools we have to balance our emotions, deal with physical and psychological distress, and promote the peace of the present moment. It can be tough to meditate without a teacher or guide; enter guided meditations. Meditating on your own requires some effort, while guided meditations quite literally walk you through a meditation and help you find a calm and peaceful state—one step at a time.

To meditate on grief, let yourself sit, alone or with a comforting friend. Take the time to create an atmosphere of support. When you are ready, begin by sensing your breath. Feel your breathing in the area of your chest. This can help you become present to what is within you. Take one hand and hold it gently on your heart as if you were holding a vulnerable human being. You are.

As you continue to breathe, bring to mind the loss or pain you are grieving. Let the story, the images, the feelings come naturally. Hold them gently. Take your time. Let the feelings come layer by layer, a little at a time. Keep breathing softly, compassionately. Let whatever feelings are there, pain and tears, anger and love, fear and sorrow, come as they will. Touch them gently. Let them unravel out of your body and mind. Make space for any images that arise. Allow the whole story. Breathe and hold it all with tenderness and compassion. Kindness for it all, for you and others.

Hold your grief gently. Let it be honoured. You do not have to keep it in anymore. You can let it go into the heart of compassion; you can weep. Releasing the grief we carry is a long, tear-filled process. Yet, it follows the natural intelligence of the body and heart. Trust it, trust the unfolding.

Keep in mind that grief doesn't just dissolve. Instead it arises in waves and gradually, with growing compassion, there comes more space around it. The heart opens and in its own time, little by little, gaps of new life—breaks in the rain clouds appear. The body relaxes and freer breaths appear. This is a natural cycle you can trust—how life and the heart renews itself. Like the spring after winter, it always does.



# Music

## The power to lift a heavy heart.

Music moves us unintentionally. Without your permission, its beauty or rhythm can bring tears to your eyes or a smile to your face....even when you didn't think it possible. The sound of your favourite song engulfs your body like the deep water in a bathtub filled to the brim, calming raw emotions and aching body parts.

Dancers, of course, know this very well. Their toes have lives of their own, tapping to the beat no matter what. If you shared the love of music with the one you lost, listening to something they loved might bring you closer again.

The right song selection can alter the darkest of moods and the saddest of hearts. Picking gentle music that's barely there duplicates that feeling you get on a massage table as someone gently kneads your muscles into relaxation.







## Massage

### Muscle kneading releases the pain.

Muscle kneading soothes a ravaged soul. Scented oils pave the way for seasoned fingers to glide along trouble spots. And when stress hits your life, these spots are everywhere.

Stressed muscles block the movement of oxygen and nutrients, increasing toxins and getting your body out of alignment. The healing power of touch helps to balance your body's energy flow so you can better handle whatever life throws at you.

Another option is a foot massage. Reflexology tells us that toes and soles mysteriously connect with different parts of the body. Manipulation of these small and mostly forgotten parts affects the rest of your body and relaxation is guaranteed.





## Art

### Illustrate your emotions.

Illustrate your angst, or celebrate the beauty of the person you've lost. Loss always means change, and change is hard. Hardship begs to be expressed... through a pencil sketch, a polished painting, or a sculpted hunk of clay. Plain-old pencil lead is easiest, but adding colour gives you more options for expressing true feelings. Flinging paint across a canvas compels you to let your emotions out, but it also allows you to keep private feelings secret if you want – seemingly random strokes hide true meanings from the world. Sculptors have a special advantage: there's something about squishing clay and the mess of sculpting that helps stir up and spit out intense feelings faster. Art is a natural emotional outlet for artists or for those who aspire to be artists. Most memorable works of art have tragic stories behind them. Perhaps this is why children seem so free; using their fingers to move paint around the page lets feelings out naturally.

## Nature

Let Mother Nature comfort you.

Nature works its magic all the time. Being away from civilization and all that it entails is a change of pace that calms the body and brain. It's the reality check we all need from time to time because life cycles are displayed everywhere in nature. Every fallen leaf and every flower in bloom reminds us of the way it's supposed to be. Loss is inevitable in life; so is growth.

You may painfully feel your loved one's absence in a home you shared. You're never really alone in the woods or any small wooded space. Wind rustles through the trees, and nearby creeks provide the sound of a happy trickle. Birds carry on with their chirping as you pass underneath them. Squirrels jump branch to branch, occasionally chasing each other around a trunk until the blur of tails resembles a party streamer wound around just for the occasion. Some little things you could smile at.

The ocean has its own special magic. The roar of the waves can help to drown out your sorrow – the noise is so loud that no one can hear you screaming into the wind. On a fair weather day, the perpetual white noise of mild surf can hypnotize you into relaxation.

Spending time in nature can help calm the chatter in your head, clearing the way for the thoughts that matter most to you or no thoughts at all.





## Plant a Tree



Nurturing it keeps your loved one close.

Filling a hole in the earth with a special tree can help fill the hole in your heart. As you dig, you'll not only stir the soil, but you'll also free up whatever emotions have taken root in your soul. Planting a tree and taking care of this living remembrance will help keep the memory of your loved one alive. As you watch it grow and mature – losing and regaining its leaves and blossoms over time – you'll be constantly reminded that life continues no matter what.

This dedication ritual might be difficult, but here's an idea that may help:

Feel the grief and the loss in the hole as you dig. Then fill it up with the love of whomever you lost.

## Aroma

### Connecting to the sense of smell.

Soothing your senses with aroma lightens the load of a heavy heart, even if it's just for a nanosecond. Favourite scents spur smiles: the first whiff of morning coffee, fresh baked chocolate chip cookies, honeysuckle.

Whether your healing path is through a rose garden or a sandy beach, your nose can guide you to a better state of mind. Visit the florist, buy a scented candle, or add lavender to your bath.

Beyond the common smells that surround us every day, serious relief comes from the inhalation of specific scents used by professional aromatherapists. Aromatherapy uses oils that are more than just good smells; these scents actually can help you to relax by attaching to your nerve receptors, inducing a chemical response – for example, lavender oil stimulates a calming effect.





## Aromatic recommendations.

Essential oils are the essence of a plant. A single drop of Rose Oil has the power to heal the head and heart as well as ease the pain of grief and loss.

### Recommended Oils:

- Rose
- Neroli
- Lavender
- Frankincense
- Ylang Ylang
- Cedarwood

Direct inhalation: Rub 1-3 drops in your palms, breath in for 30-60 seconds.

Bath: Add 6-12 drops of oil to a teaspoonful of honey or unscented coconut oil. Stir the mixture into your bath water, get in, soak, and let your body and mind be soothed.

## Soothe Your Senses



Calm the emotional overload.

All your senses are in high gear. They deserve a break. If the thought of doing anything for yourself is too hard right now, consider this a homework assignment. It's important to nourish yourself a little every day because it will keep your body healthier and might even spark a new perspective.

Try soothing your senses with pleasure. Plan a whole day of sensory bliss. Bombarding all five senses guarantees that something will trickle in to help soothe your heart. Pampering them will help you regroup.







## Support Groups

Proof you're not alone.

Many people try to deal with loss on their own because this is what they learned, passed down from generation to generation. The old saying of "toughing it out" do not appear to work. Being too embarrassed, shy, or ashamed to ask for help just prolongs the pain. There's sure to be a better way to go through life than the hard way.

What makes support groups work so well is the mix of experiences that this small circle of strangers are going through or have been through. They understand exactly what you are going through right now, and suddenly you don't feel alone anymore. And watching the veterans who stay to support new group members proves that you'll eventually feel better.

A small room full of people holding tissue boxes is bound to make you feel more like letting it all hang out. In these groups, tears are common. It feels safer when everybody's crying. Support groups are more than just chances to vent. Learning from one another where to go from here moves your emotions along, and the shared experiences sometimes creates forever friendships.



## Consider other support.

### **Professional Support, EAP & Therapy**

Check your local listings for social workers, psychotherapists, and psychologists that have their own private practice.

### **Spiritual Centres, Churches & Clergy**

Many religious and spiritual centres are often great resources when it comes to providing faith-based support groups and one-on-one support.

## Local resources.

**ARCH Hospice:** *Grief & Bereavement Support* | [archhospice.ca](http://archhospice.ca) | 705-942-1556

One-on-one counselling sessions, child and youth loss support & grief support groups.

**Victoria Order of Nurses:** *Bereavement Program* | [von.ca](http://von.ca) | 705-942-8200

Offers bereavement support group programming.

**SAH Crisis Services:** *Crisis & Psychiatric Intervention* | 705-759-3398

Prevent crises from worsening, short term support & referrals to services.

**Canadian Mental Health Association** | [ssm-algoma.cmha.ca](http://ssm-algoma.cmha.ca) | 705-759-5989

Provides advocacy, education, referrals, and counselling services.

**Nogdawindamin:** *Anishnawbek Care & Crisis Support* | [nog.ca](http://nog.ca) | 705-946-3700

Integrated Anishnawbek support and care to families and children.

**Algoma Family Services** | [algomafamilyservices.org](http://algomafamilyservices.org) | 705-945-5050

Adult and children's mental health services, counselling, & therapeutic group programs.

**SAH Senior's Mental Health** | 705-759-9396

For seniors experiencing complex grief, depression, or other mental health concerns.

## Conclusion

### Wishing you well.

Now that you have some ideas on how to help yourself through this difficult time, maybe you can identify with at least a few and take the first baby steps toward healing. If any of these strategies work for you, the relief you feel will be, well.... A relief.

When you feel stuck, you often need something to jump-start your healing process. Think of **The Journey Through Grief** as a little travelling support group to use as a resource whenever you need a boost. The key to someone else's solace may just be the piece of the puzzle that will fit for you, helping you move forward to living again. Your life can come alive again if you give it a chance.

We know it can be difficult to hear this, but hindsight tells us that every loss, disappointment, and failure brings with it the opportunity for learning and growth. However difficult it is, many people often find renewed meaning and enrichment for having known and cherished a lost loved one.

Grief takes its own sweet time, so patience is key- patience with yourself, with others, and with the passage of time. Every person's experience is his or her own and cannot be rushed. Be kind to yourself, and stay connected with those around you who listen with compassion. And remember: you won't always feel like this.

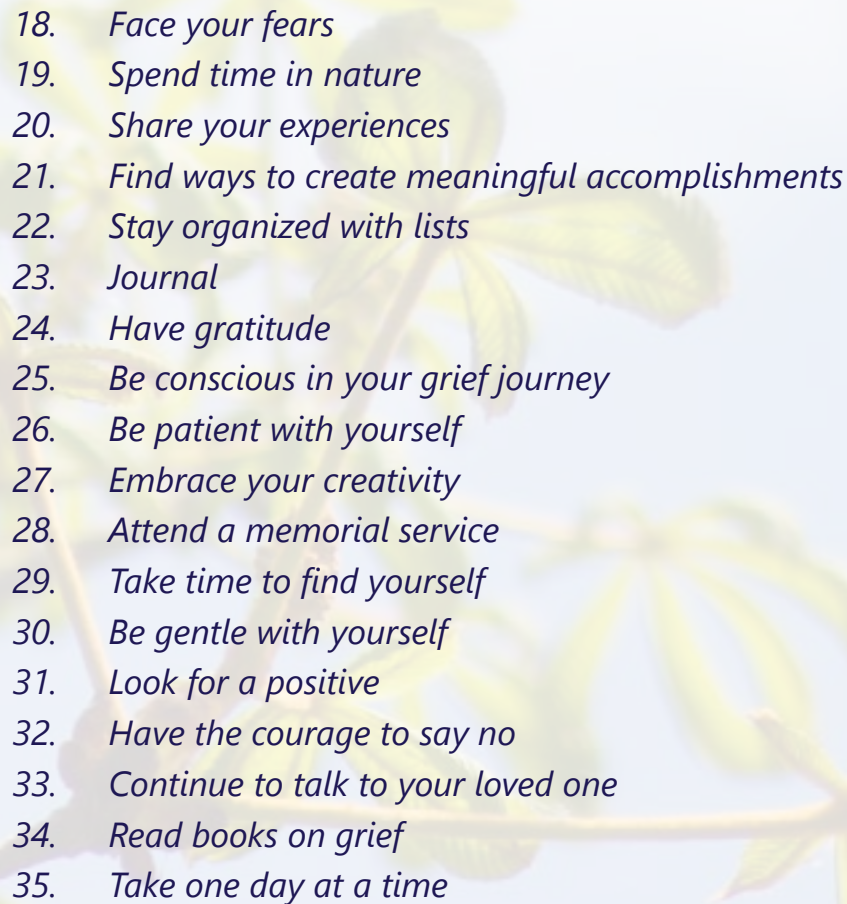






*Hope for Healing: Advice from the ARCH Grief Group*

1. *Hold onto memories of the good times*
2. *Minimize the severe missing if possible*
3. *Make a decision to change your thoughts*
4. *Volunteer*
5. *Do not isolate*
6. *Partake in self care*
7. *Treat yourself to dinner*
8. *Release a butterfly*
9. *Engage in friendship and laughter*
10. *Attend a grief group*
11. *Keep busy with an enjoyable hobby*
12. *Be around others who "get it"*
13. *Talk about your emotions*
14. *Get involved in the community*
15. *Welcome free time/down time*
16. *Step out of your comfort zone*
17. *Spend time with family*

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18. *Face your fears*
  19. *Spend time in nature*
  20. *Share your experiences*
  21. *Find ways to create meaningful accomplishments*
  22. *Stay organized with lists*
  23. *Journal*
  24. *Have gratitude*
  25. *Be conscious in your grief journey*
  26. *Be patient with yourself*
  27. *Embrace your creativity*
  28. *Attend a memorial service*
  29. *Take time to find yourself*
  30. *Be gentle with yourself*
  31. *Look for a positive*
  32. *Have the courage to say no*
  33. *Continue to talk to your loved one*
  34. *Read books on grief*
  35. *Take one day at a time*



Comfortable end-of-life journeys

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