

TENDING THE OPEN WOUND OF GRIEF: THE TASKS OF MOURNING

“The territory of grief is heavy. Even the word carries weight. Grief comes from the Latin word 'gravis,' meaning 'heavy,' from which we also get grave, gravity and gravid. We use the word gravitas to speak of a quality in some people who are able to carry the weight of the world with a dignified bearing. And so it is, when we learn to carry our grief with dignity.”

— Francis Weller, *The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief*

TASK 1. ACCEPT THE REALITY OF THE LOSS

It is common to experience a trauma response after encountering the loss of a loved one. During this response we may minimize or deny the loss. To complete the task of acceptance, the loss must be accepted on the levels of the intellectual mind, physical body, and emotional self.



TASK 2. PROCESS THE PAIN OF GRIEF

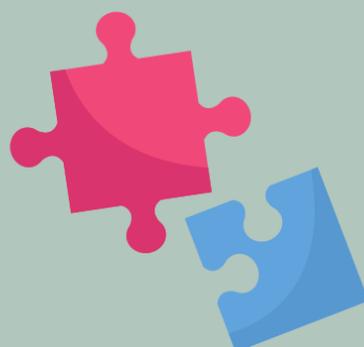
Grief may include negative or distressing thoughts. Grief carries painful emotions such as sadness, anger, shame, heartache, and guilt. Grief may manifest in body aches, pains, and fatigue.

It is tempting to use avoidance to cope, burying or hiding these experiences from others and ourselves, rather than facing them. Working with grief requires tenderness, confronting, naming, and making sense of these experiences.



TASK 3. ADJUST TO THE WORLD WITHOUT THE DECEASED

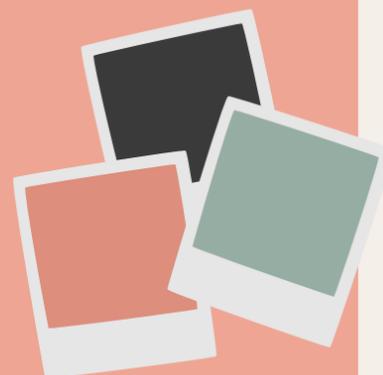
Death of a loved one will usually bring about life changes, taking the time to mindfully adjust to the new world without your loved one honors their memory and your continued living. You may experience *internal adjustments*, *external adjustments*, and *spiritual adjustments*.



STEP 4. FIND WAYS TO REMEMBER THE DECEASED WHILE MOVING ON WITH LIFE

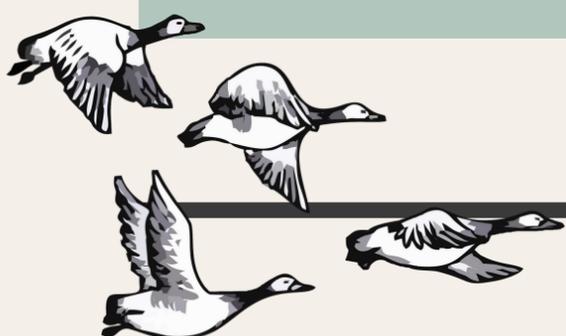
Most importantly, moving on does not mean forgetting.

Moving forward means finding a place in your heart for the beloved, while continuing to live and leave room for continued relationships, love and connection.



Book Suggestions For Learning More About Grief

- On Grief & Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss By Elisabeth Kubler-Ross M.D. & David Kessler
- It's OK That You're NOT OK By Megan Devine
- How to Carry What Cannot Be Fixed: A Journal for Grief By Megan Devine
- The Wild Edge of Sorrow: Rituals of Renewal and the Sacred Work of Grief By Francis Weller
- The Grief Workbook: Journaling, Somatic Exercises, and Activities for Moving through the 7 Stages of Grief by Rachel Anne Havekost



REMINDERS:

- The root of the word 'bereaved' is "reave" which literally means being torn apart. The pain you experience is normal, and it is important to reach out for support to help you hold your experience. **You do not have to move through these tasks alone.**



**THIS PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL GUIDE WAS
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Therapist Aid. (2016, April 29). Grief psychoeducation (guide). Therapist Aid. Retrieved November 3, 2021, from <https://www.therapistaid.com/therapy-guide/grief-psychoeducation-guide>.

Of Note: The **Tasks of Mourning** handout is based on the four tasks of mourning described by J. William Worden.