



Lots of people expect to be over the grief process after six months. You may have truly experienced some healing, some days when things seem much better. Still, it is common to experience a sort of “second wave” of grief around the sixth month following a loss. Many people say this is a time of intense feeling, but the pain is usually not as long lasting as before.

As you continue this journey you may find that talking about your feelings and concerns with a trusted and compassionate listener is a very effective way to release and resolve feelings of loss and grief. However, sometimes that special person is simply not available. To whom do you talk at midnight after you’ve been tossing and turning for several hours, too restless to sleep? During the day you experience times when you are too anxious, upset, or confused to speak aloud about your feelings. In such situations, writing your feelings down on paper can bring relief.

The enclosed handout “Keeping a Personal Journal,” discusses many of the advantages of writing. If you are one of those people who finds writing effortless and enjoyable – then I need not say anymore. You will probably charge right ahead with these ideas if you have not already incorporated writing into your daily routine.

However, if you find writing to be a painful chore, then learning a few simple techniques can make a big difference. Remember, no one but you will be reading your journal. You may choose to destroy your writings immediately after writing them. Keeping this in mind then, you do not have to worry about penmanship, spelling, grammar, or even whether it makes any sense. You may find writing in outline style easier and quicker than writing complete sentences. Just jot down isolated thoughts and ideas. When you see them in black and white on the paper before you, you will be able to move toward clarification.

Once you start writing, force yourself to keep your pen moving, even if your thoughts wander or you find yourself scribbling or doodling. You will be amazed with the thoughtful gems you can produce if you allow yourself to move along with your flow of ideas. And always remember that one of our Bereavement team members is available to meet with you privately or to visit by phone.

KEEPING A PERSONAL JOURNAL

One of the most useful means for long-term self-development is the systematic use of an ongoing workbook, diary or journal. Such a journal, thoughtfully done, can provide a structure to assist in paying closer attention to our lives and in evoking and developing our understanding of ourselves and others. It acts as a “reflector” of the inner course we are charting day by day, and can give us the stimulation and support which many seek from the outside world.

The purpose of journal writing is to afford you the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning and the significance of events in your life as they apply to your inner self.

The focus of journal writing is on your unfolding awareness of the new meanings, values and interrelationships you are discovering in yourself and the world.

The values of journal writing, and the act of presenting your ideas on paper forces you to formulate and clarify your thoughts and their accompanying feelings, thus enhancing the power and precision of your thinking.

When you make the move from simply thinking something to actually writing it down, you are increasing your commitment to your own conscious unfoldment. Writing forces you to discriminate and to choose which of all your thoughts are important enough to be documented, thus getting you in better touch with your sense of values.

Once you record your ideas on paper you do not have to be preoccupied with thoughts of losing them. The writing makes “room” for new avenues of thinking that you may not have had time to previously consider.

Writing is an effective yet harmless way of “letting off steam” by providing you with a “fully accepting friend” that allows you to discharge your tensions and to vent all of your powerful and disruptive emotions.

The themes and categories for journal writing, in addition to the narrative written material about your own thoughts, feelings and observations, you may also choose to include:

- Drawings or other visual materials, i.e., dreams, fantasies, symbols, or diagrams that are useful in clarifying or expressing your ideas.



- Illustrations from magazines or newspapers which capture the thought or image about which you are writing.
- Personally meaningful quotations you may have read or heard.
- A section entitled “Bright Ideas” may help you to “brainstorm” about all the possible alternatives to your problems.
- An inner dialogue or imaginary conversation between yourself and any other significant person in your life will help you to clarify your relationships and to develop understanding and insight into your problems.

The outcome of journal writing. In time you will find that your writing has been effective not only in helping you to define specific problem areas, but also in helping you to work through your problems and in bringing about resolution and personal growth.

For future use your journal presents you with a fine document which can be referred back to show how much progress you have made.

IDEAS FOR JOURNAL WRITING

You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your loved one by recording your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to the person who dies, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following issues:

- A special memory that I have about you
- What I miss the most about you and our relationship
- What I wish I’d said or had not said
- What I’d like to ask you now
- What I wish we’d done or had not done
- What I’ve had the hardest time dealing with
- Ways in which you will continue to live on in me
- Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas specific to your situation and relationship.