

What matters most... is the rest of your life.

The first year after the loss of a loved one can be quite a year – a time marked by change, pain, sadness, longing, adjustment, caring, courage, remembrance and hope. This is a deeply personal journey that varies in pace, altitude, and terrain. However different individual paths may appear, along the way most people will be asking the same questions. *“How do I learn to live this new life?” “What matters now?” “What do I do with the love I still feel in my heart?”*

In his book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom wrote, “Death ends a life, not a relationship.” Some of the most important grief work people do is nurturing an enduring, continuing bond with their loved one. Eventually most come to see memory as a gift, allowing them to hold their loved one close in their heart and mind. Some nurture this connection from a spiritual perspective, talking to their loved one regularly, sharing the details of everyday life or asking for assistance with the challenges they’re facing, praying for them and asking for strength and peace for themselves.

Others connect to their loved one through physical tasks and endeavors – the meaningful use (and sharing) of their loved one’s belongings, choosing a resting place or designing a marker, cooking their favorite meal, planting and tending a memory garden or framing and displaying a favorite picture. Grief itself brings moments along the way where powerful connections to our loved ones can be found.

Grief is the process of healing after loss, a catalyst

for change and transformation. Although grief accompanies people as time goes on, it needn’t define or rule their lives. People move from living *in* grief to living *with* it, from constant awareness of their loss to sporadic pangs of yearning and sadness that diminish in intensity as time goes on.

Grief is a personal, transformative journey that will not leave you where, or as, it found you.

Grieving fully, well and wisely is as important as loving fully, well and wisely: the two are different sides of the same coin.

This life-changing journey can create lasting insights. The insight that the love you shared can be transformed into an enduring connection. The insight that the rest of your life matters, and there is vital need to care for yourself and nurture your own future. The insight that you have the right to live well, fully, hopefully, joyfully and meaningfully. ■

More on reverse ►

How are you doing...really?

You may feel a sense of relief that the difficult first year is behind you. For some, life is much easier than when the loss was new, and although they wobble emotionally now and then, they consistently feel better and more hopeful. Others may have anticipated a clear and dramatic shift in how they'd feel after a year of grieving and are disappointed that grief is still stubbornly present, more familiar but not so notably diminished.

Looking back on the first few days and weeks after the death of a loved one, most people recognize that they've changed quite a bit since then. With time, how feelings change may become *more subtle*, a little harder to notice, define or describe than in the early days of grief. Although some days are still heavy with sadness, people have experienced times when their mood lightened and their outlook brightened considerably. When they've found themselves in stormy emotional waters, they discovered the strength to persevere.

Having managed and survived so many major challenges in the first year, as the anniversary of the death approaches, people can be surprised and discouraged with feelings of overwhelming sadness, anger, longing or lost in remembering what was happening at this time last year. Be patient, take heart and keep going. You did not lose all the healing, recovery or progress you've made – that stays with you. After a few difficult days (or weeks), you'll find yourself bouncing back.

Grief is a paradox, a process of both falling down and picking oneself up again (and again), of endings and beginnings, of holding on and letting go. What people take from this experience is deeply personal, reflecting both who they are and their unique relationship with their loved one. 🌈

Grief & Loss Services

Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care is committed to offering individual and family counseling, support groups and educational workshops to our hospice families and members of our community. For more information, to make an appointment or to register for a group, please call Rainbow Grief & Loss Services.

Rainbow Grief & Loss Services can be reached Monday through Friday, 9:00 to 5:00 pm at 847-653-3141.

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