



Rest. Breathe. Remember.

Over the past few months, we at St. Luke's Hospice have been honored to support you and your family. We hope this series of letters has been helpful and encouraging to you so far. At this point in time, some may find that their grief has softened, while others may not. Wherever you're at today, it is important to remember that each person's journey will be different.

Every grief is unique

For some, tears have been a frequent companion while working through these past months. For others, dry eyes and clear thinking have been more characteristic. This does not indicate less love or a lesser grief. Every person grieves in his or her own way, and every loss is experienced differently. Some may not cry for months, and then suddenly dissolve into tears at the grocery store one day. Know that experiences like this are not uncommon.

If memories of your loved one make the tears start, let them flow. If memories of happy times bring laughter, this can be incredibly healing as well. Both joy and sorrow can be a release for the soul.

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Continue to get plenty of rest, good nutrition and seek any support you may need. Encourage and support those around you who are also grieving. As mentioned in our last letter, incorporating slow, deep breathing at various times during the day can have many benefits as well. This practice can help you unwind, reduce the effects of prolonged tension, and allow thoughts and memories to surface.

According to author Tom Attig, "Grieving is a journey that teaches us how to love in a new way now that our loved one is no longer with us. Consciously remembering those who have died is the key that opens the heart that allows us to love them in new ways."¹ Author Albert Keller sees this transformation from a physical relationship into one of memory as an essential part of grieving.²

MEMORIES AND MOVING FORWARD

There are many things you can do to remember your loved one. Some of the following suggestions may bring comfort and hope.

- Visit their gravesite
- Plant and nurture a tree in their honor
- Prepare your loved one's favorite foods
- Light a candle every week to remember them by

While you try these things, remember your loved one. What did they weep for or laugh about? How did he like to spend a Saturday afternoon? What was the color of her eyes? What did you do together that will forever remind you of him or her? What is the story of his illness? Were you nearby when she died?

Not all memories may be good ones. Work through those too. Look at old pictures. Share them with those you love. Continue to process your emotions with someone you trust.



Reaching out

You may feel more than ready to share memories and stories, but find that those around you don't provide the opportunity. This is not an uncommon experience, and can be very frustrating. Many people are uncomfortable talking about death. They may worry that speaking about the one who has died will bring more pain. In these situations, you may need to speak first.

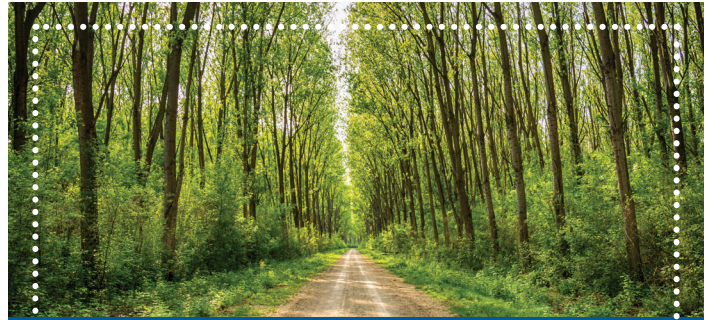
You may experience many moments of loneliness as you work through everything. This is common. Please remember that you are not alone. If you would like more support, we would be honored to talk to you or schedule a grief counseling session.



WRITING FOR WELLNESS

It may be helpful to record some of your memories in a journal. You could also write a letter to the one who has died. If there are things you wish you could have shared with them, this can be an opportunity to do that. What would you say? Consider starting with Ira Byock's "Four Things That Matter Most."³

1. Please forgive me.
2. I forgive you.
3. Thank you.
4. I love you.



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

— Hellen Keller

If you or a loved one would like additional information or support, or want to decline future mailings or phone calls, contact St. Luke's Hospice Duluth at **218.249.6100**.

Endnotes

1. ***The Heart of Grief***, by Thomas Attig, Oxford University Press, 2002.
2. ***At the Close of Day: A Person-Centered Guidebook on End-of-Life Care***, by Lance L. Davis and Albert H. Keller, Gorham Printing, Rochester, Washington, 2013, p. 163.
3. ***The Four Things That Matter Most***, by Ira Byock, M.D., Atria Books, 2014

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