

# Journey of Hope...

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THE GRIEF AND LOSS OF A LOVED ONE

## Spring is a time of hope and light

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**"The friend who can be silent with us in a moment of despair or confusion, who can stay with us in an hour of grief and bereavement, who can tolerate not knowing... not healing, not curing... that is a friend who cares."**

– Henri Nouwen

## FINDING HOPE WITH THE CHANGING SEASONS

After the cold darkness of grief, the idea of spring is a welcome and symbolic reprieve. Spring reminds us that long dark days soon brighten, cold melts into warmth, gray blossoms into color and heartache hatches into hope. Spring is a time of new beginnings and cleansing.

Allow yourself to indulge in spring as a chance to see your life in a new and refreshing light. Just as the sun warms the earth, allow this season to warm up your heart.

Take advantage of the warmer temperatures and spend some time outdoors. Go for walks in your neighborhood. Breathe in fresh air deeply and turn your face to the sun. Walk to the market or the post office or just sit outside and read. Scratch around in the dirt, plant a few flowers or put out a bird feeder.

Spring is a time of rebirth. Perhaps it is time to take up a new hobby or to return those you have enjoyed in the past. If you were an avid fisherman or outdoorsman, then go for it. If you used to play tennis or golf, then make arrangements to play soon. You may



even consider calling a friend or family member to join you for an adventure in the outdoors!

A little "spring cleaning" may also be in order. You may feel the need to de-clutter your life physically and mentally by removing from your home unwanted reminders of dark times in your life or simply getting rid of unnecessary clutter.

If you are ready, begin to clean out the personal items of the loved one who is gone. Here are a few suggestions for making this difficult task a little easier: Invite a friend or family member to join you, Play your favorite music as you work or listen to a recorded book. Designate special items to be given to special people. And finally, break it down into stages, don't try to do it all at once.

Embrace Spring, this is the light at the end of the tunnel you have been waiting for. If you are not ready for something big, then start small, it can be something as

small as opening the curtains and windows to allow the fresh air and sunshine in, or purchasing some flowers or a plant that will brighten your home!

## 6 TIPS FOR RE-AWAKENING HOPE AFTER LOSS

By Karen Mehringer

While in the grieving process, it may feel as though hope has abandoned you. Depressed, you question your purpose for living. You ask, "Why did this happen? What is the point of it all?" You may have lost hope for living your dreams or don't even know what they are anymore. Perhaps your loved one was an integral part of living the life you had always imagined. Uninspired, you go through the motions of your daily life without feeling truly alive.

The following are helpful tips to re-awaken hope when you no longer feel jazzed about life.

**1. Have the Courage to Heal.** Our society encourages us to move on quickly and get over it. We are taught that crying is for sissies. I would like to suggest the opposite...that it takes great courage and inner strength to face grief head on, acknowledge it, and process through it. As you summon the courage to face your grief, remember you don't have to do it alone and reach out for support. Processing through it, you will begin to feel lighter and hope will emerge like a rainbow after a storm.

**2. Be Patient with the Process.**



Healing and transformation does not happen over night. Grief comes in waves. Some waves are large, fast and close together. Others are small and spread apart. It's important to honor your own grieving process and not rush it. There are gifts within your grief. If you rush the process, you will miss out on them. The important thing is to be present with your grief and allow it to have a life of its own.

**3. Have Faith in a Higher Purpose.**

Trust there is a higher purpose for your grief. You don't need to know what it is, but have faith that there is one. Read inspirational stories or watch movies of others who have transformed tragedy into greater purpose. Allow their transformation to re-awaken hope for your own transformation.

**4. Remain open to New Possibilities.**

When feeling hopeless, we often forget there are other possibilities for how to perceive our loss. What if there are possibilities for your life beyond your imagination? What if your loss is the beginning of new life? The fertility for new creation? As you grieve and let go, imagine opening up to the infinite possibilities waiting for you. During this time, you are being invited to re-invent yourself and your

life. Slow down and take the time to journal, go within and ask questions like, "Who am I? What is calling to me now? What does my soul want to create?" Every one of us was put on this planet to create abundantly with our life force energy and to experience joy.



**5. Have Great Compassion for Yourself.**

As you process your grief, take the opportunity to love yourself like never before. Imagine your inner child and what he or she needs to feel loved. Give your inner child attention and allow him or her to come out and play. Ask, "What would feel good in this moment? Perhaps your inner child would enjoy coloring, swinging or skipping. Or, maybe you would feel nurtured by a long walk in nature, a nap, luxurious bubble bath or watching a silly movie. Give yourself permission to love yourself!

**6. Remember You are Worthy.**

Sometimes grief can cause us to feel down about ourselves or like failures depending on the nature

of our loss. It is important to remember you are more than worthy...you are perfect and whole, just the way you are. Work on forgiving yourself and remembering your true nature... pure, innocent and beautiful. Find a picture of yourself when you were a baby or young child that reminds you of your essence and place it on an altar, or where you can see it frequently like by your computer.



As we move into spring, I encourage you to look for signs of new life. Just as surely as the flowers promise to blossom this time of year, hope promises to re-awaken within you.

**Journaling Exercise:** Give hope a voice and write a letter from it imagining it could speak to you. What helps it to feel alive? What does it need to re-awaken? Is there anything it needs from you? Write a letter back. What do you need from it?

*"If you lose hope, somehow you lose the vitality that keeps life moving, you lose that courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all. And so today I still have a dream."*

– The Trumpet of Conscience - Martin Luther King, Jr.

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## Q & A

**How can I honor his/her memory?**

Honoring the memory of a loved one is a very important part of the healing process. Finding unique ways to share your memories will lessen the pain of the loss. Include mutual friends and family members in any type of memorial activity or ceremony you choose. One idea is to have each friend and family member write a letter, story, poem, or other creative work that expresses their feelings or memories of the loved one. If your loved one has left any type of diary, collection, creative work, or other mementos you can put

these on display, organize a book of these works, or otherwise share them with friends and family. Many estate organizers recommend that each family member contributes to an annual family journal so that when a family member passes, all of the remaining family members have a collection of memories and thoughts from their loved one. Be creative as you choose your memorial. Try to include things such as favorite music, foods, or activities of the person you are honoring to share with the group.