

What CAN I DO
— *with my* —
Broken Heart?

STEPPING STONES THROUGH GRIEF

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Illustrated by Pippa McNay

Present to

From

What Can I Do with My Broken Heart—Stepping Stones through Grief

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Dedication

This book is first dedicated to my late husband Ralph Timothy Thorn who died of kidney cancer on February 28, 2006. Prior to his death, he tried to prepare me for what grief might feel like. I had no clue how badly grief would actually hurt until the aloneness set in after his funeral. Since his death, I have learned lessons that I share in this booklet.

I also dedicate this booklet to my dear friend Leah Hollen Ramsey who died June 10, 2016. In her younger years, she experienced the pain of loss when her husband died suddenly and her seventeen-year-old son died six months later.

Before I started writing this booklet, I asked for her advice. I asked her, "What helped you get through your losses?"

Here are the key points she told me: *"Stay alive; you have to decide to live."* *"Find someone to listen."* *"Life will be different."* *"Look for a new purpose."* *"It never goes away."* *"And you must do what you can do."*

After her losses, I admired how she decided to live. She returned to school and completed her masters degree. She began teaching special education where she impacted many young lives before her retirement.

After your heart heals, you too will have opportunities to sow seeds of hope for someone else.

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Introduction

If you are reading this booklet, more than likely, someone you love has died. I am very sorry for your loss. With their passing, you have begun a journey that will change the course of your life forever, setting you on a path of grief with many unknowns.

Perhaps your loss was anticipated. If you were the caregiver or family member, you may be physically weary as well as sad. Or maybe your loss was completely unexpected, sending you into a tailspin of disbelief and pain. Or, heaven forbid, maybe your child has died.

No matter what your situation, your loss is the worst loss because it is *your* loss, the death of someone you held dear.

After the death of his wife Joy, C. S. Lewis, the famous writer, compared grief to feeling like fear. I too felt afraid after my husband died and wondered if life could ever be worthwhile again without him.

You may be wondering “How will I ever get through this?” Please believe that you can get through it. In fact, you must. What other choice do you have anyway?

You may ask, “What can I do with my broken heart?” Before you read further, let me reassure you your heart can heal and that life can be joyful again. For right now, be patient with yourself and do what you can to get through one day, then another.

There are no magical potions to hasten healing after a loss. Just as a broken bone takes time and rest to heal, a broken heart is not instantaneously healed—grief is a process.

Hopefully this booklet will include some words or thoughts to help you along on your path. Keep reading and don't give up hope. For now, just *keep walking, one step at a time*.

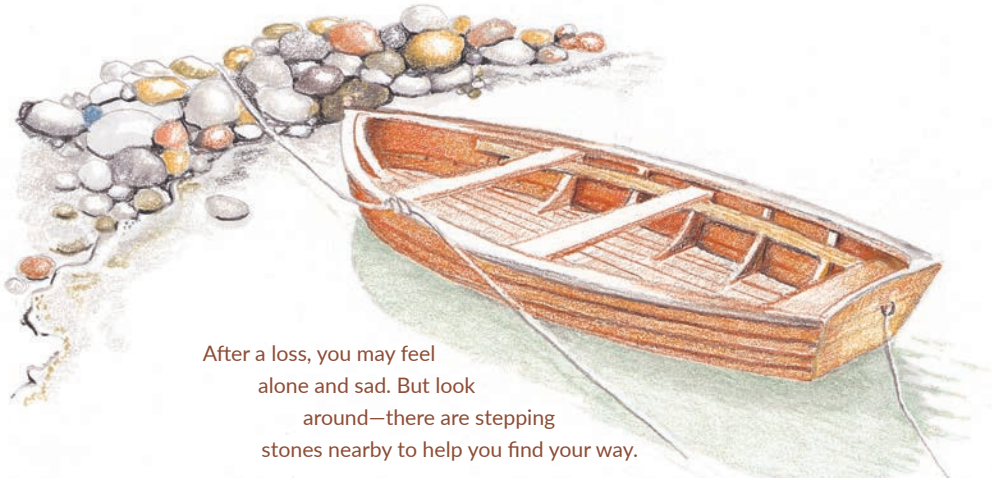
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Thank you to Meadowlark Hospice staff for allowing me to share my lessons learned with families in our program. Thank you to Lilly Hitsman, my wonderful editor—I would be insecure without your editing skills.

Thank you Pippa McNay for providing the beautiful artwork for this booklet; to Judy Entz, my consultant, and Jim L. Friesen, my designer, at Mennonite Press for your expertise. You are the greatest!

Last, thank you to my wonderful husband Thomas Phelps for your patience and support for this project—I love you.

The hardest walk is walking alone, but it's also the walk that can make you the strongest. —Author unknown



After a loss, you may feel alone and sad. But look around—there are stepping stones nearby to help you find your way.

Live One Moment at a Time during the First Weeks, and Just Keep Walking

After the life of a person has been memorialized, some family members and friends appear to return to their regular routines as if nothing ever happened. Yet an overwhelming sadness may set in for loved ones left behind when they realize their lives are changed forever.

A few days after my husband's funeral several years ago, I had one of those moments. I was standing in front of the washing machine, ready to wash clothes. We kept our laundry soap and bleach on a shelf above the washer and dryer, and that's also where my husband kept his ball cap that he often wore.

When I inadvertently knocked his cap onto the dryer, I was struck with the realization he would never wear that ball cap again—he was gone and would never come back.

My realization hit me with such force I could hardly breathe. I was overcome with grief; I cried. I felt so alone, so afraid.

1

Adjusting to life without your loved one can be scary, but there is hope. For right now, live one day at a time, one minute at a time if necessary. Put one foot in front of the other, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES for the First Weeks— What to Expect/What to Do

1. Your heart may feel like it is broken. You may yearn for your loved one, feel numb, frightened, depressed, angry, and have trouble concentrating.
2. A sudden loss can be devastating, almost unbearable. Even if a death was expected, you may find out you were not really ready for the loss.
3. You may question why your loved one died, and you may never find an answer.
4. When excruciating bouts of sadness overwhelm you, try to find someone you can talk to.
5. Actively make plans to feel physically safe if you are living alone—extra locks, motion lights, telephone and emergency numbers easily accessible.
6. Take your time deciding what to do with your loved one's possessions. You can store them in totes until you are ready to make decisions.
7. After a loss, some dream about, sense the presence of, or smell the fragrance of their loved one. If you have a similar occurrence, you are not losing your mind.

*Fall down seven times,
get up eight. —Author unknown*

Look around
for the stepping
stones through
your grief—they
are there, waiting
to help you.



When You Are Lonely, Get Back Up When You Fall Down

“Whatever you do, don’t fall in!” my mother would say to my sisters and me as we headed out the door at my grandmother’s house in Tennessee. On hot summer days, we were eager to get to the small stream down the hill from the house to wade and explore.

Then my mother would add, “We don’t have any other clothes with us, so don’t get wet!”

We would hastily reply, “Okay!” over our shoulder as we left—we had no intentions of falling in.

Sometimes there were rocks protruding from the shallow water, providing stepping stones across the stream, making it less likely that we would fall into the water and get in trouble with our mother.

2

If we walked further up the hollow where the stream widened, we had to cross on large, flat slippery rocks worn smooth and slick from years of water flowing over them.

No matter how carefully we walked, one of us usually fell in the water and got soaking wet! Then we hoped for the sun and a hot breeze to dry us off quickly before our mother called for us.

Grieving is like walking on slippery rocks, and there will be times that you *will* fall down when waves of sadness knock you over.

When you fall, do not stay down. Get up. Shake off the water, allow the sunshine to dry you off, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES through Loneliness

1. Loneliness can set in after friends have expressed their condolences. Since loneliness is not good for your health, be proactive to do what you can to combat it.
2. Keep in touch with family members and friends—call them, email them, meet them for coffee, and stay involved in groups or church.
3. If seeing your loved one's empty chair makes it too difficult to eat at the table, change your environment. Eat at a different place in the house, on the deck, or outside.
4. Research has shown that nature is healing, providing gentle breezes, sunshine, birdsongs, flowers, and squirrels or rabbits at play.
5. According to research, exercise, such as walking, can increase endorphins, the "happy chemicals" in our brains, that help lift depression.
6. Consider making small changes inside your house such as rearranging furniture, painting walls, or adding touches of colorful furnishings.
7. Music can add pleasant sounds to a too-quiet house. It can lift spirits and soothe frayed nerves.
8. Writing your thoughts and memories can be therapeutic.
9. Weekends and evenings may be very lonely, so deliberately plan small

*One may walk over the highest
mountain one step at a time. —John Wanamaker*

Apple blossoms let us know that spring has arrived. Grief, like winter, will pass, and joy will follow.



You Must Go through Grief, but There Is Hope

When our grandson Will was three, his family lived in a cul-de-sac where Will played with other kids. Sometimes he would slip out the front gate or climb over the backyard fence, unbeknownst to his mother.

One day Will's mother was in the front yard when Will decided to go out the gate for a visit. His mother Misty said, "Will Thomas, don't you dare go through that gate!"

Without a word, he did not go *through* the gate, but climbed right *over* the top and proceeded on his way; he did not get away with his attempt!

Unlike Will who climbed over the gate, we have no choice but to go through the gate of grief after a death. But by going through grief, we begin to heal.

Losing someone we love is painful, and our lives are forever

changed. Your loss cannot be compared to someone else's loss—it is *your* loss, *your* pain, so it hurts *you* the most.

If your loss was unexpected, you had no time to brace yourself, so you may experience numbness and disbelief, maybe even anger. If your loss is expected, you may not realize how excruciating the pain can be until you go through it.

You may feel like you have arrived in an unfamiliar land, but there is still hope. For right now, believe that you can get through your grief—that your life will go on, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES in Search of Hope

1. As Reinhold Niebuhr's Serenity Prayer says, "Accept the things you cannot change" and "change the things you can," little by little, step by step.
2. Merriam Webster dictionary defines *hope*: "To want something to happen or be true and think it could happen or be true." Believe that your heart can heal. Grab on to that hope and don't let go!
3. Look for the blessings that surround you, even though they may be difficult to see because of your sadness.
4. Like a determined flower peeking through a crack in the sidewalk, turn your face toward the sun—you can grow from your experience.
5. You will learn lessons of empathy and understanding from your loss. When you are stronger, you will find ways to help others who are grieving.
6. Invest your time in healthy relationships and positive people. Avoid alcohol, overspending, or bad company.
7. Even if you are older, consider new possibilities for your life, and live every moment. Grandma Moses started painting at 80, and Nola Ochs graduated from college at 95!
8. Don't underestimate the power of faith in helping you through your difficult times.

*A journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step. —Lao-tzu*

Your grief walk
will be unique
because there is
only one you.



Grief Is a Process, Your Own Unique Journey

You are a unique individual with your own unique genetics, heritage, beliefs, personality, and life experiences. You had a unique relationship with the one who died, so you will grieve in your own way after your loss.

If you had a loving relationship with your loved one, you will grieve differently from someone in an abusive lifestyle. It will make a difference if you spent one year versus 60 years with your loved one.

The nature of a death can impact how family members and friends grieve. Deaths due to suicides, homicides, and missing persons can have excruciating effects on families, making closure more difficult.

A loss can be sudden or expected. The person can be older or a child—there are so many variables. How well a person has coped with other difficult situations in life may be a predictor of how each will grieve.

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After my husband died, I searched for answers to make the pain go away. I bought books, read, and researched the topic, but I found there were no road maps or magic formulas for healing my loss.

There are no rights or wrongs, no time table—some grieve faster, some slower, but each in his/her own way.

Let me reassure you that your heart *can* heal. There are some simple, common-sense strategies, many of them research based, that can help.

Watch for the stepping stones and take care of yourself physically, mentally, and spiritually. And *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES for Your Unique Journey

1. No one has experienced your loss in the same way that you have. So give yourself permission to grieve in your own way; be patient with yourself.
2. Your life is forever changed after the death of a loved one, but you can re-build your life and find joy again.
3. After your loss, be prepared for comments from others that seem rude, remarks that may sting. People may not mean to be rude—they just don't know what to say. Ignore their comments or gently reply—your choice.
4. If you need to learn new practical skills, such as cooking or cutting grass, don't be afraid to ask someone to teach you.
5. You may be amazed with the inner strength you find to move forward with your life. You are stronger than you think!
6. Remember if you loved deeply, you will grieve deeply—that is the price of love.
7. If you have regrets, you cannot change things now. So forgive yourself and move forward.
8. Continue your life in a way that will honor your loved one.

The first step towards getting somewhere is to decide that you are not going to stay where you are. —John Pierpont Morgan

Shop for bright, colorful fruits and vegetables. There's something to the saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."



Don't Forget to Take Good Care of Yourself

If you are sad and overwhelmed after your loss, it may be difficult to take care of your health properly. Even eating well, sleeping well, and drinking water can be a challenge.

One lady named Martha once told me that the most important thing she was reminded of after the death of her husband was: "Eat what you can, rest when you can, and drink water." In her grief, she had almost forgotten all three.

After a loss, your body may be more vulnerable to illnesses, so making and keeping doctor visits and dental appointments are very important.

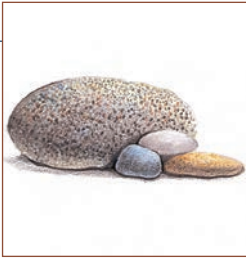
Since you may not feel like eating much, make your food choices healthy ones. Select bright-colored fruits and vegetables from the periphery of the store—their bright colors let you know they are full of nutrients! Avoid snack foods high in sugar and salt that have "empty" calories.

Remember that water is still the best beverage, and lemon or lime juice can add a little flavor.

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Do what you can to get your sleep cycle back on track. Remember that gentle exercise such as walking can help increase endorphins in the brain that help combat depression.

If you cannot eat, are sleeping too much or too little, are severely depressed or having suicidal thoughts, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. Do your best to take care of your health, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES toward Staying Healthy

1. If you have been ignoring your health, work to establish new routines that include healthy food, gentle exercise, adequate sleep time, and enjoyable activities.
2. Pamper yourself a bit with a favorite food, a special tea, a luxurious bath, a good book to read, a movie to watch, or a change of scenery.
3. Eat nutritious, bright-colored fruits and vegetables that are rich with vitamins and anti-oxidants; nuts and avocados with healthy fats; lean meat, fish, or eggs for protein.
4. For adequate sleep, aim for a regular bedtime in a cool, dark room. Limit naps and make sure to exercise earlier in the day. A warm bath or reading before bedtime may help. If you are still having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor.
5. According to research, exercise is good for your body and emotions. It strengthens and tones muscles and helps decrease depression.
6. Remember our bodies need water for respiration, elimination, and good kidney and cognitive function.
7. Fill your life with positive thoughts, materials that are uplifting, and music that is soothing and healing. Avoid people who drag you down.
8. If you are a spiritual person, have faith and take care of your spiritual needs.

I am not discouraged, because every wrong attempt discarded is another step forward. —Thomas A. Edison

You may feel
alone, but choose
to search for joy
in your life.



“You Are Sure to Be Happy Again,” —President Abraham Lincoln

Just as a broken bone can heal, your broken heart can heal too—grief is a part of that healing process.

Over one hundred years ago, President Lincoln experienced grief after several losses: the death of an infant brother; the death of his mother Nancy Lincoln when he was 9 years old; the death of a young woman he loved before he later married Mary Todd.

After their marriage, Mary and Abraham had four sons—Robert, Edward, Willie, and Thomas (Tad). Edward died at the age of 4; Willie died at 12. President Lincoln was well acquainted with grief.

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After his many losses, Lincoln said:

"In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all and it often comes with bitter agony. Perfect relief is not possible except with time. You cannot now believe that you will ever feel better. But this is not true. You are sure to be happy again.... I have had enough experience to make this statement."

Right now it may be hard to believe that life will be good again. But, for now, try to believe what President Lincoln said, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES toward Happiness

1. Cry if you need to or laugh if you feel like it. Both tears and laughter are healing.
2. If you wish you could have done things differently before your loved one died, try to forgive yourself and take a step forward.
3. Trust yourself. Believe that your life has a purpose and search for ways to make it happen.
4. Your life is forever changed, so take steps toward reaching a new future.
5. Look for ways to use the talents and skills you already have and consider learning something new.
6. Research shows that doing good things for someone else is therapeutic for you.
7. Research studies show that volunteering has many benefits, including satisfaction and a longer life. Consider volunteering for a hospice, a food bank, a senior center, a hospital, or a church.
8. Give yourself some time before you make major changes in your life.
9. Celebrate each small achievement, every milestone during your grief walk.

It is better to take many small steps in the right direction than to make a great leap forward only to stumble backward. —Old Chinese Proverb

Some believe a visit by a cardinal is a reassurance their loved one is okay and watching over those left behind.



Making New Memories on “The Firsts”— Anniversaries, Birthdays, and Holidays

Facing “the firsts” after a death can cause apprehension and dread. “The firsts” include the anniversary of the death, birthdays, wedding anniversaries, holidays, or any special occasion that might bring back a flood of sadness and memories.

When my family was facing our first Christmas after my husband died, none of us wanted our traditional Christmas meal. So after some discussion, we decided to celebrate a new way.

We celebrated the week *before* Christmas. We ate barbecue together at a restaurant without reminders of our past Christmases—no turkey, no dressing, and no pumpkin pie. Even though there was still a hole in our celebration without my husband, we got through the meal.

I then left Kansas and flew to Fairbanks, Alaska, where I celebrated Christmas day with my sister and her family, tucked away in a cabin surrounded by deep snow.

Even though I missed my husband terribly, Christmas dinner was less painful than a traditional meal in our old farmhouse would have been. I was still in Alaska on December 28th, my first wedding anniversary without my husband.

On any of your “firsts,” you may choose to celebrate exactly the same as in previous years, or you may try something entirely different. Plan ahead and protect your heart as you remember your loved one.



STEPPING STONES through the Firsts

1. Be purposeful as you celebrate each “first” such as birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions, or the anniversary of the death of your loved one.
2. You may have less energy, so consider celebrating simply, differently.
3. Make plans for your “firsts” that feel right to you.
4. Since the first anniversary of a death can be difficult, be deliberate as you make plans. There are no rights or wrongs, so just plan what is most helpful for you.
5. Consider ways to create new memories or traditions with your family or friends.
6. If you do not want to be alone on an anniversary, ask a friend or family member to spend time with you.
7. Consider including your loved one in your “firsts”—through photographs, lighting a candle, talking about your memories, by writing your thoughts, or other unique ways to honor him/her.

Great results cannot be achieved at once; and we must be satisfied to advance in life as we walk, step by step. —Samuel Smiles



Let a friend help you
along during your
“down” times.

Grief Is Like Ocean Waves with Ups and Downs

Before my late husband Ralph died, he told me, “Remember grief is like ocean waves. At first, the waves will be so big that they will knock you down. Then after a while, the waves will not be as high and will be further apart.” He was trying to prepare me for what I would face after his death.

Since I particularly dislike roller coasters, I felt my grief was more like riding an enormously high, terrifying roller coaster, one hill after another. Before I could catch my breath from one hill, I was facing another one, and I inwardly screamed from the pain.

Then, in time, similar to the waves that my husband described, the steep hills became a little less high and further apart, gentler in nature. Now, years later, there are little waves and sometimes just ripples.

After my husband's death, hearing the song "I Will Always Love You" was a "big wave" for me—he had tried to sing it to me shortly before his death. After he died, if the song came on the radio, I immediately turned it off—I could not listen to it! Now I can listen to the song with only twinges of pain and a sweet memory.

The pain in your heart will begin to decrease too. So for now be patient, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES through the Ups and Downs

1. Don't be surprised if a song or a memory sends you into an emotional tailspin—these are normal feelings.
2. Welcome tears if you need to cry—tears are healing.
3. Find someone you can turn to when you are feeling down, someone who will listen and help you back up.
4. Grief does not end at one year, but the ups and downs become less frequent and are gentler.
5. Find your own peaceful place where you can relax and let your sadness and worries float away. Mine was at the end of a pasture overlooking a field with cows while the sun set.
6. Search out encouraging written materials, good quotes, and friends or family members that help lift your spirit.
7. If you have trouble getting out of bed, cannot eat or sleep, or are having suicidal thoughts, reach out to someone who cares about you. You may need to see a doctor, a counselor, or a pastor. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
8. Consider attending a bereavement group such as ones sponsored by a hospice or a church. Group members offer understanding and support.

The greatest step is out the door. –German Proverb

In nature, as
with grief, the
cycle of life
continues—
spring follows
winter and
life begins again.



Finding Joy in Nature, Dirt Therapy, Humor, and Music

Soon after my husband's death, I felt drawn to the outdoors. I kept a walking path cut around our pasture. Many evenings I walked to the end of the pasture where I had a glider seat, and I watched the sun go down.

The cows in the adjoining field came running when they saw me coming and we “talked.”

I welcomed the sights and sounds of nature around me. Prairie chickens sometimes flew up as I approached their nesting ground, and red-winged blackbirds perched on cattails around the pond.

Close to the house, I enjoyed glasses of iced tea outside under the trees or on my deck. I sometimes ate supper outside instead of eating alone in the house.

In memory of my husband, I planted a red blaze maple tree in the front yard and two weeping mulberry trees in the back yard. It was fun to watch them grow.

I learned that peppy music or funny videos helped lift my sadness while I was inside the house.

I still remember the first time I genuinely felt like laughing a few months after my husband died. At first, I was shocked. Then I felt guilty. I was afraid that laughing meant I had forgotten my husband. But I soon realized that it was okay to laugh, that I will never forget him.

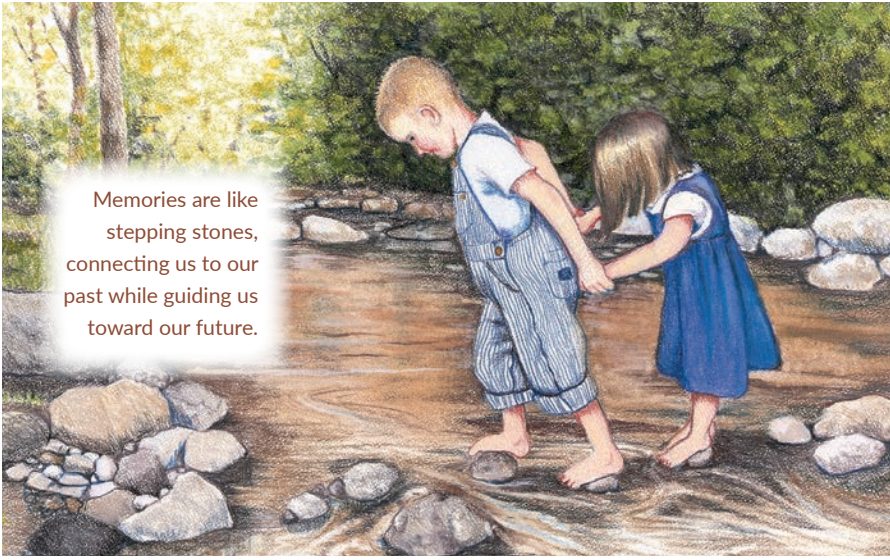
Growing plants or trees (dirt therapy) can give you something to look forward to. Let nature, music, and humor help your heart heal and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES toward Joy

1. Research has shown that the outdoors has a healing effect on emotions, whether you are outside or viewing nature from the inside. There is beauty above you, around you, and under your feet—look for it!
2. Nature can bring healing through sunrises and sunsets, butterflies and birds, flowers and dragonflies—watch for them.
3. For some, having a pet can provide entertainment and companionship.
4. The changing seasons bring beauty, and the cycle of life reassures us spring always follows winter, just as joy can replace sadness.
5. Don't feel guilty for laughing. Laughter is medicine for the soul. Search for things that make you laugh—funny movies, an upbeat story, or a joke book. And don't forget the popcorn!
6. Research has shown that music can help reduce pain, lift spirits, and set feet tapping. Music can also relax and soothe the soul.
7. Public libraries can provide books to read, music to listen to, and videos and materials about grief.
8. Don't forget the role of faith in your healing journey. Hope, pray, trust, and believe.

*When someone you love becomes a memory,
that memory becomes a treasure. —Author unknown*



Memories are like
stepping stones,
connecting us to our
past while guiding us
toward our future.

Celebrate Memories—Three Hearts on a Twig

During a recent visit, my oldest sister Joy showed me a small branch, scarcely larger than a twig. It was about one-third inch in diameter and about 10 inches long—a smooth, straight branch carefully selected for a purpose.

Three small hearts were meticulously carved on the twig. Joy told me our daddy had carved the hearts. He gave the twig to her when she was young. She slowly turned the branch and pointed out the three hearts. I could imagine Daddy searching for the just-right twig and carving it with his pocket knife.

She said, “Daddy said one heart stood for Mama, one for him, and the little heart stood for me.” He carved the hearts when Joy was small, when they were just a family of three. Later there would be six more children born, but the twig spoke loudly of my daddy’s pride in being a first-time father.

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As Joy showed me an older basket, she said, “This is one of my most precious things.” She told me our mother had bought it for her. She then spoke of our grandmother’s now-silent, old mantle clock and an old, treadle sewing machine. Joy spent hours pedaling and stitching dresses for her younger sisters on that machine.

Joy’s split-oak hand-woven baskets reminded her of the special hours spent with her late husband Richard, searching for each basket.

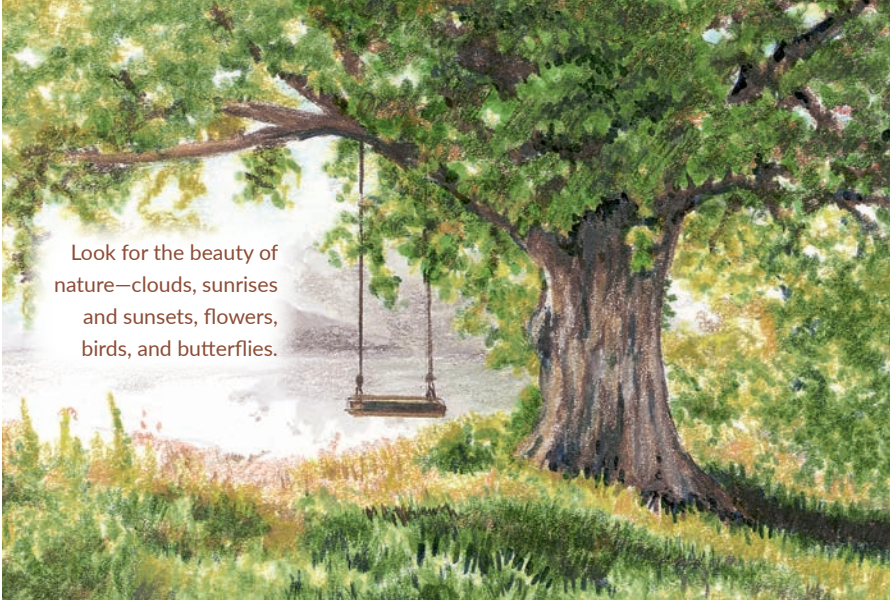
After someone dies, our memories are precious connections to the ones we love. So cherish your memories, and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES through Memories

1. Memories are treasures—happy memories, sad memories, and funny memories—don't be afraid to tell all the stories, even if they make you laugh or cry.
2. Consider the good lessons and values you learned from your loved one who died. Honor your loved one by passing their stories on to others in your life.
3. You will never forget the one you loved, even as you make decisions to move forward with your life.
4. Some choose to revisit old haunts where memories were made; others choose to stay away. Choose what will be most healing for you.
5. You can revisit your memories by looking at photo albums and home videos.
6. Memories of your loved one can bring comfort and gratitude for the time you had with him/her.
7. You may want to write down your memories, your stories, about your loved one for younger family members. Writing can be therapeutic.

They are not dead who live in lives they leave behind. —Hugh Robert Orr



Honor Your Loved One by Living Your Life Fully

Betty, a lady whose husband died a few years ago, recently told me a story. She said her husband knew he was dying and he wanted to encourage her to move forward after his death.

Her husband told her, “*I am the one who is dying. You are not the one who is dying. I want you to keep on living.*”

A quote from a former high school principal whose wife died: “I honor my wife’s life by how I live mine. She would want me to live.”

Both Betty and the former principal have chosen to stay actively engaged with people and activities. They are bright spots to those around them.

In 1969, after four parents experienced the deaths of their sons, they founded Compassionate Friends, a bereavement group for families of children who have died. Since then, Compassionate Friends has helped thousands of grieving parents.

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After Emily Perl Kingsley gave birth to Jason, a baby with Down Syndrome, Emily used her writing talents to integrate adults and children with disabilities into the format of the Sesame Street program.

After John Walsh' young son was kidnapped and killed many years ago, John has tirelessly worked to help solve mysteries of other kidnapped children, bringing closure to many grieving parents.

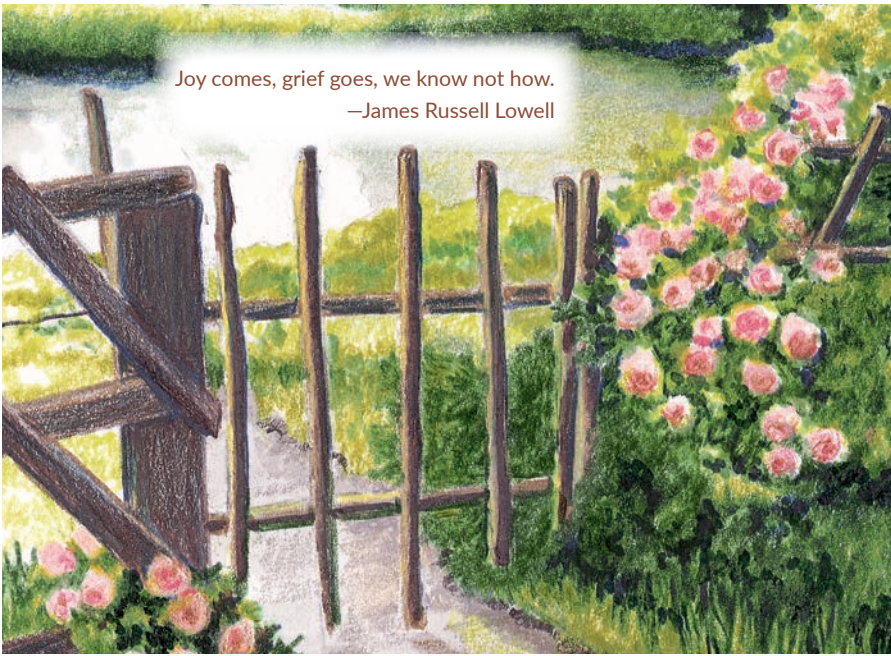
Honor your loved one by living your life fully, by making the world a better place. And *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES to Honor Your Loved One

1. Be grateful for the influence, the fingerprints your loved one left on your life.
2. Cherish your memories of time spent with your loved one. Cherish the love, the experiences, the fun, and the lessons learned together.
3. Even though you are sad, look around for blessings in your life, and be thankful.
4. Search for unique, tangible ways to recognize and carry on the legacy of your loved one—write their story, plant flowers or a tree, give a scholarship, or make a donation in their memory.
5. Don't be afraid to talk about your loved one's life with family and friends. Keep their memory alive.
6. Honor your loved one's life by how you live yours.
7. Use the lessons you have learned from your own grief walk to help others who are hurting after a loss.

*The man who moved a mountain is the one who started
by taking away the small stones. —Old Chinese Proverb*



The Question: What Can I Do with My Broken Heart?

*W*hat can I do with my broken heart has been asked by millions through the centuries, and each person must find his/her own answers.

We cannot choose when we are born or when we die. But we *can* make choices about what happens in the middle. So choose *hope* and *believe* your broken heart can heal. Tell yourself, “You can do this—you have to do this!” What other choice do you have?

You may have to establish new routines, make new friends, and find your “new normal.” This can be difficult, but it is not impossible.

Someday your grief will soften and become more manageable. As you integrate your loss into your life, the intense waves of grief will become gentler and further apart.

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Healing does not come instantaneously, but *healing does come*. For now, be patient, look around for the blessings in your life, and live life as joyfully as possible.

As you move forward, don't forget to *love*. Show love to others through your kind words and actions—you will honor your loved one and build a rewarding life.

Cherish your memories—they will help sustain you in the tough times. And don't forget to *laugh*—it is good medicine for the soul.

Hope, believe, laugh, love, dream, and live! Theodore Roosevelt said, “Believe you can and you're halfway there.”

As my dear friend Leah told me, “*Do what you can,*” and *just keep walking*.



STEPPING STONES for a Broken Heart

1. Death cannot close the book on a love story. Love does not end at death.
2. Your loss will be a part of you for the rest of your life. Even though life will be different, it can be fulfilling again.
3. Be thankful for lessons you have learned from your grief. When the time is right, lend a hand to someone else who is grieving.
4. Passing on kindness to others will help your heart heal—doing good is good for you.
5. Do not feel guilty for enjoying life again, and remember that laughter is good medicine!
6. Actively search for a new purpose for your life—there is a purpose.
7. Honor your loved one by making something good come from your loss.
8. Dare to dream new dreams. Robert Frost said, “In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life—*it goes on.*” We too must go on. *I wish you healing and joy.*

*While we are mourning the loss of our friend, others are
rejoicing to meet him behind the veil. —John Taylor*



I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and the sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!"
"Gone where?"

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Here she comes!"

And that is dying.

By Henry Van Dyke

About the Author

J. Dawn Rountree (Dawn's pen name) is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She grew up on a farm in Tennessee but has lived in Kansas for many years. Even as a child she enjoyed writing. When Dawn's husband died of kidney cancer, she began writing regularly to help deal with her own grief.

She later began leading a hospice bereavement group, writing articles about grief for group members. Her writing reflects her southern roots as she shares her own grief journey through personal stories and metaphors.

She is the author of "Pathways through Grief," a series of bereavement pamphlets used by hospices, churches, and individuals. She writes a weekly column for her hometown newspaper and is the author of two books, *Finding Your Clover after a Loss* and *Tales from Tootleville—Just a Little Light*.

Dawn is a registered nurse and licensed master social worker. She has worked as a nurse and social worker in a rural hospital and currently writes for Meadowlark Hospice, Clay Center, Kansas.

About the Artist

Pippa McNay studied graphic arts and illustration at California State University, Northridge, and Moorpark College, Moorpark, CA. She has enjoyed sharing her knowledge of art for over 19 years by teaching art classes for all ages. Pippa has illustrated 4 books: *The Blue Santa, Flerds, Finding Your Clover after a Loss*, and *Tales from Tootleville*. When she is not drawing or painting, she enjoys sculpting and pottery. She currently lives in Wichita, KS.

*Life is a cycle, always in motion. If good times have moved on,
so will times of trouble. –Indian Proverb*

Dear Reader: My prayer is that your heart will heal, that you will find joy and a fulfilling future. If this booklet has been helpful to you, rather than toss it, please pass it along to someone else who has experienced a loss.

Blessings to you. Dawn