



# *pathways* through grief *keep walking*



**WHEN** our youngest grandson Will was three, his family lived in a cul-de-sac where Will liked to play with the 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 front 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 of the gate and proceeded on his way. No, he did not get away with his escape attempt!

Unlike Will Thomas who climbed over the gate, there is no choice but to go *through* grief after a death. By grieving we heal. So be patient with yourself—grieving is not easy, but you can make it.



"Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith.  
It is the price of love."

—Author unknown

# GRIEF PATHWAY OUTLOOK

## TERRAIN

Rocky, unmarked  
mountain path;  
steep grade

## WEATHER

High wind,  
thunderstorms likely

## HEARTACHE INDEX:

High

## TRAVEL TIPS:

- A song or a hug from someone can bring a gush of tears—tears are healing.
- You may feel numb, frightened, depressed, angry, or have trouble concentrating.
- After the funeral, loneliness may set in. Prepare for that possibility.
- Grieving is hard work, but it is by grieving that our hearts heal.
- Take care of yourself. Stay hydrated by drinking water. Eat nutritious food and sleep as best you can.
- Take measures to feel safe. Consider adding an extra lock, a new motion light, or phone beside your bed.
- After your loss, you may dream about or sense the presence of the one you loved. Many others have reported such occurrences.

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# CONVERSATIONS WITH COWS

**NUMBER** Twenty-Seven and Number Forty-Eight trotted toward me and reached the fence before the rest of the herd. I greeted them at the end of the pasture with “How are you, babies?” They were the two most inquisitive Holsteins, the black-and-white cows that lived on the other side of the fence which adjoined my acreage.

I had a routine. Some days after getting off work, I headed toward the Walking Path. Walking was my salvation—it helped me fight depression after the death of my husband the last day of February of that year. My husband’s death left a gaping hole in my heart. The house no longer held his laughter. There was no one to welcome me home; no one to talk to, no one to eat with. So I avoided the aloneness of the house by walking the path.

After winter lost its grip and warmer weather replaced the cold chill of winter, the spring grass emerged. For years my husband and I had kept a walking path cut around the pasture, but with the arrival of the spring grass, I cut a large new area at the west end of the pasture. I bought an outdoor glider seat and put it in my newly-mowed space. I named my special place Peaceful Place—a name that described it well.

At Peaceful Place, I could enjoy the evening breeze and watch the sun go down. Some evenings the sunsets were glorious as the pinks, golds, and oranges painted the western sky! My husband had told me, “Remember me when you see the sunset,” and each time I saw a beautiful sunset, my thoughts were of him. How could I ever forget him?

Besides the sunset, there was something else special about Peaceful Place—the cows! There were close to twenty cows who were excited to see me. Even though the herd might be about a quarter of a mile away, when they saw me walking the path, here they came—some faster than others, hurrying toward me. They inquisitively listened as I greeted them.

Each cow had an ear tag, and I soon learned to watch for #27 and #48 who usually led the pack—they were the most curious! They came up close to the fence and dangled their heads over. Their big kind brown eyes watched me while I watched them. And I had my “conversations with cows.”

I appreciated those black-and-white Holsteins because they gave me a diversion from my loneliness. Friends and family still cared. They had attended the funeral, sent cards and memorials and still called from time to time. But they had returned to their normal routines—they had grieved and moved on. But I, like so many others experiencing a loss, was left to face each day without my husband, and the cows became my buddies.



It was up to me to figure out how to cope, how to grieve, and how to rebuild my life. But I would have never guessed that cows would have helped! I am sure they did not understand a single word I said, but they came. They were there!

As you walk your Path of Grief, hopefully you will find a friend or family member to accompany you on your path. And perhaps you will find your own Peaceful Place, whatever that place might be. Even if your path is lonely, keep walking, one day at a time, one foot in front of the other. If you stumble, get back up, but keep walking. With the passage of time, each day will become a bit easier. Hang on, and just keep walking.

J. Dawn Rountree

After a loss, life can be frightening.