

Hope for Healing



Memories

Forever In My Heart

Nearly a year has passed since the death of your loved one. The sadness you feel may still be so real that it feels as if it were yesterday, yet, at the same time, it seems like forever since you last saw your loved one's face, heard their voice, or felt their touch. *As this first anniversary approaches, you will likely be flooded with memories.* Though you've progressed a great deal over the past year, this day may bring back a lot of painful emotions. Know that this is normal and, though it may not feel like it on this particular day, you have still come a long way in your grieving process!

In the past year you have faced many changes in your life. You and others around you may have expected life to be "back to normal" after the first year, and feel discouraged that you are not completely "over it" yet. These expectations may even be expressed openly by people around you or implied by their attitude. *Just continue to remind yourself that grief is a process with no particular timetable.* Your own timetable will differ from others depending upon your personality, cultural and religious beliefs, coping skills, support system, relationship to the one you lost, and circumstances of the death. Your life will

likely never be exactly the same as it was before because *there is now a missing piece—a void in your heart that your loved one used to fill.* With time, however, the pain from this hole in your heart will lessen. *You will fill it with all the things about your loved one that made you smile and carry him or her with you wherever you go.*

Anyone who has lost a loved one knows that you don't "get over it." Instead, *you learn to incorporate the absence and memories of him or her into your life.* Even years after someone dies, the pangs of grief may come out of the blue, and feelings of heartache and missing the deceased are rekindled from time to time. Yet you develop ways to get used to it. *Your grief starts walking beside you rather than consuming you. And you move forward, one day at a time, bringing along the person you love inside your heart.*

Even though grief does not end with the first anniversary, hopefully you can say that *you have learned many lessons throughout this past year.* Your grief may have taught you that the tears and memories which hurt so much can become a healing bridge from the past to the future. You may have learned to receive and accept the love and support of those around you.

Bereavement Services Available:

- Individual grief counseling
- Mending Hearts grief support group:: open to the community. Please call the number below for current schedule
- Educational resources and referrals to groups in your area available upon request.

Contact:

J. Sita Lewi, LCSW, ACSW
Bereavement Coordinator
Altus Hospice
11233 Shadow Creek Pkwy,
Suite 123
Pearland, TX 77584
(281)493-9744



"Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal."



"A part of you has grown in me, and so you see, it's you and me, together forever and never apart, maybe in distance, but never in heart."

Perhaps you have learned to *treasure each day* and to show love to others, never taking for granted the gift of life. And if you haven't yet learned it, you will learn that although your life is changed, *there can still be joy in living.*

The loss of a loved one may have caused you to look at yourself and your life differently. You may have developed *new values and priorities* since the loss, especially when it comes to spending time with the ones you love. You likely *came to know your true self*, as well as your hopes and fears, a little better. And you've most definitely developed more *compassion* for others experiencing the pain of loss.

Death forces you to look back, and acceptance involves slowly turning your body around to look forward. This is a good time to look over the past year and see how far you have come, where you are now, and where you would like to go from here. Allow yourself to develop new hopes and goals for the future. The road ahead may look frightening and lonely, but it can be a positive new adventure in your life as you *create new memories to add to the old ones.*

Perhaps your circle of friends is changing. Some of the old friends may not be as supportive as they once were. But there may be *new friends* who have come along or who you will yet meet. These new friends learn about you and accept you the way you are now. Don't be afraid to seek out and embrace new friendships, as these *will become important pieces in putting your life back together and walking the rest of your journey.*

If there is something you've always wanted to do, now is the time to do it! If you've wanted to take a trip to Greece, start planning your vacation! If you have always wanted to try yoga, join a class tomorrow! If you've always wanted a garden but never had time while caring for your loved one, now is the time to go buy those seeds! *Implementing new, pleasurable activities in your life can play a key part in making the transition into this new chapter in your life.*

The first anniversary is an important milestone. *Look backward at your progress...look at today and congratulate yourself for the major achievement of coming this far...look ahead to the opportunities that are yet to come.*

The death anniversary is a good time for some *special care and activities.* Some people choose to set aside the day as a time to honor the life and memory of their loved one. Others choose to plan something for after the anniversary—a type of reward for making it through. It is important to know that many of your friends and family will NOT acknowledge this date. Many often think that if they don't bring it up, you won't remember. *Be open and honest with them about your needs* for this day and whether you would like to be with them or be alone. Give them advanced notice to be sure they make themselves available if needed.

IDEAS FOR COMMEMORATING THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY

- ❖ Visit the cemetery. Take along a flower, a note, or a balloon bouquet.
- ❖ Light a memorial candle and extinguish it at bedtime.
- ❖ Plant a tree or flowers and watch them grow year after year.
- ❖ Make a donation to your church, temple, or favorite charity in memory of your loved one.
- ❖ Spend some time with family or friends talking about the good things you remember, the funny things, the jokes played, the special moments.
- ❖ Do something you enjoy—a walk along the river, a visit to a museum or art gallery, a drive in the country.
- ❖ Write a letter to your loved one, sharing the year's happenings, the accomplishments you've made, what you have missed with him or her being gone.
- ❖ Go through old photo albums or videos and recall the special memories.



"I feel a warmth around me, like your presence is so near, and I close my eyes to visualize your face when you were here. I endure the times we spent together and they are locked inside my heart, for as long as I have those memories, we will never be apart, even though we cannot speak no more my voice is always there, because every night before I sleep I have you in my prayer."