

"GROWING THROUGH GRIEF"

A WORKBOOK FOR GRIEVING ADOLESCENTS

Developed by:

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To the grieving adolescent,

This is a very special book, which has been developed especially for you. The death of a parent, grandparent, sibling or friend is one of life's most profound experiences. The loss of someone special brings many confusing feelings that are often very difficult to talk about. When someone close to you dies you suddenly have a lot of difficult emotions to deal with. It is important to remember that every one deals with their loss and grief very differently, and this makes us sometimes feel very alone in our experience. Whether the death was expected or not, you will still feel shock, disbelief and intense sadness. This workbook will help you to work through these feelings and emotions, and it will also provide you with the opportunity to create memories of your special person who has died. Treat this book as your personal diary, which you have created for yourself. Use this book in your own time and in a space that is comfortable for you. It is your own private journey, which you can share if you would like to, however, it is yours, and you can decide. By working through your book you will be able to better understand your feelings and you will have created a legacy of the person who has died, so that their memories can live in your heart forever.

The Authors

I remember..... (Name of person who died)

PHOTO

He/she died _____

He/she was called _____

I chose this picture because:

When I look at this picture I feel:

There are things I will always remember about _____(Name)

Some of these things are:

When someone special dies, we often feel that we should have asked more about their life. It is so valuable to piece together our loved one's history, so that we can pass this on to our family's one day. We can call this "legacy work", which means that we create a legacy of the person who has died, so that their time here with us will never be forgotten.

_____ (Name of person who has died)
was born _____ (Date of birth)
in _____ (Place of birth) .
He/she went to school in _____,
And then went on to become _____.
The things that I remember most about my special person's life are:

When I think of his/her life, I feel:

You can use the "tree" to write down, or think about your special person's life.

The death of some one special may leave us feeling as though we have lost everything about that person. However, nothing can take away the **memories** that we have of that special person. Memories serve as mental photographs, and it is really helpful to think of some special memories, so that you can create a "photo album" of memories for yourself.

Please think of some of the special memories that you have with/of that person, you can choose to either write them down or draw them.....

"Metaphysical Will"

Having remembered that special person, the times you spent together and the importance of that person in your life, it may be valuable for you to do a "metaphysical will". When we talk of wills, we often talk about material wills, and the leaving of possessions. However, after the death of some one special, it is so important to also look at the personal qualities of that person. Therefore, in this will, you can think of the qualities that you would like that special person to leave for you. These could include things like: courage, strength, honesty and so on.

Spend some time thinking about the special qualities of the person who died, and then write up the will. The value of this is that the legacy of this person will truly live on inside of you forever, as it is often these very qualities that we would want to pass on to our families one day.

When we recall memories or thoughts of the person who has died, it is often very painful, and we may even feel the tears welling up in our eyes, despite how much time has passed since the death. Death, no matter when it happens or how old we are, is one of life's most profound crises. It leaves us feeling afraid, lost, insecure, angry, depressed and overwhelmed by emotion.

These feelings may come and go, however, there may be a part of you that knows and feels that loss despite our ability to still be able to laugh, chat and carry on with our busy lives. Grief is often referred to as a rollercoaster, because there are really low moments and there are also some really okay moments.

In the low moments, we may question life and the meaning of this loss. We may want to run away from it all.

We may even feel so alone in our experience that we feel no one will understand. We may be angry with the person who has died, or even at our remaining parent who also doesn't seem to understand you. The world may appear to be an awful place, and the future without that special person may seem bleak and frightening. Our thoughts are also often filled with all sorts of questions, fears, concerns, worries, anxieties, images, beliefs, fantasies, and questions, and so often there are no answers for any of these. We may even feel like we are going mad, that we don't even know who we are anymore or what we are doing here. Just to let you know, all of this is normal, even if you think that you are the only one feeling this way. Infact, if a person did not experience all of this at some point, then that would seem odd.

In the okay moments, which may be few and far between initially, we may even feel rather numb to it all. We may find ourselves laughing, chatting to friends, enjoying ourselves and even having fun. Please allow yourself this, and don't feel that you are not allowed to do this. It is very hard to be sad all the time, and sometimes we need this break from the pain, and this does not mean that we have forgotten the person who died, as that loss stays in our hearts forever, regardless of what we are doing. The truth about this roller coaster is that as time goes by the low days become less and you will experience more good days. Give yourself permission to be happy!

The tricky thing about grief is that the low feelings may come when you are not expecting them. For example, birthdays, father's day, mother's day, anniversary's, celebrations and achievements. These days are often rather difficult days, when our loss seems so highlighted. However, it is important to acknowledge that the "first" of all these days, i.e. first birthday without your loved one, the first Christmas and so on, are always the hardest, and as each year goes by it does get easier.

This is your "Grief Roller Coaster", please write down your roller coaster ride, so that you become more familiar with the process of grief.

It is important to tell you, that as adolescents, your grief experience is also unique. You might have even felt this already, perhaps you have realized that for you, things are different from your younger sibling (if you have one), different from your remaining parent, and you may be feeling very alone and misunderstood because of this. Because you are an adolescent, you are no longer a child, and not yet an adult, and this is a difficult life stage as you are changing and growing. Adolescence is a time of confusion, when you are establishing who you are, where you fit in, and what you want from life and from others. When one experiences the death of some one special during this phase, it can leave you feeling very insecure, angry, and frightened about the future. Many people your age also feel that they have to be "strong" for their family, so they hide all their feelings and put on a mask that tells the world that they are "fine". At first, this mask works well, as it becomes very safe to hide behind it.

However, after a while, it becomes lonely behind that mask, as our feelings of grief and loss don't go away, they build up because we don't express them or let people see them.

Then eventually one day we find ourselves reacting with intensity to situations, as all our stored up emotions come to the fore. It is like a pressure cooker that eventually explodes! So, please give yourself permission to feel the pain of your loss! You may find that you are trying to be supportive of your family, however, you do not have to be strong all the time, it is not possible!

Use the pictures of the masks, to write down:

"My coping mask": The face you show to the world.

"Behind the mask": The real you, and what you are really feeling.

The experience and journey of grief is a difficult one, and these activities can help you in making it easier. Not only will it help you to remember your special person who has died, but it will also help you to know that what you are feeling and thinking is normal and expected.

These are poems written by other people your age, who have experienced the death of a parent.

Poems.....

If you enjoy writing, use this page to write a poem about your experience or about your special person who has died.

“ _____ ”

Written by _____

The Future

It is often very difficult to think about your future without your special person. Thoughts about the future make us feel sad and anxious.

What are your feelings about your future without your loved one:

"Growing around grief- Another way of looking at grief and recovery"

The following model of grief is helpful when considering one's future. When a special person dies, our grief consumes every part of our lives, awake and asleep. The picture below represents your life and the shading represents your grief. When someone dies, we tend to think that as time goes by, the grief will shrink and will become neatly fitted into our lives, in a small and manageable way. However, it does not go away completely.

But, what actually happens is different. Our grief stays just the same size, but rather our lives grow bigger around it. It is sort of like growing a new life around our grief, perhaps even a richer, more meaningful life.

Louis Tonkin, TTC, Cert Counselling (NZ): Mary Potter Hospice, New Zealand

The following questions can help you to think about the future without your loved one.

"My special person would want the following for my future":

"Where do I see myself in the future":

"Where is my special person now":

"What I can/have taken from this experience":

"The loss has changed my life in many ways":

Some good ways:

Bad/negative ways:

The death of someone special changes our lives in many ways, and it also changes who we are. Initially, it is very difficult to see any "good/positive" changes, as all we can feel are the negative changes, and all we can think of is how terrible this loss is. However, as time passes, we can sometimes see that there are some "positive" changes. Other young people have said that at first they could see no meaning in their terrible loss, it was all bad! However, as time moved on, they realized that because of their experience, they had become more sensitive people, and that they were able to help other's in pain. These are only few examples, but many more have been reported. Perhaps you have come up with others.

The fact that you are working through this book shows that you have "survived" the death of your special person. Also, because of your experience, what advice would you give to other's who experience the death of some one special.

"My Advice to you....."

Remember: when you are having a 'low' moment, reflect back on this advice as it can also help you!

Coping and getting on.....

When we lose some one special, our lives are changed in many ways. Some of the changes are not always easy to cope with. Some advice to you, is to cope each day at a time! This advice has helped many grieverers as it is often too much to try and cope with the bigger picture. So, take each day at a time, and should today be a difficult day, just remember that tomorrow may be easier. It is okay to look to the future, but never forget the past. Your special person will always be with you and the memories that you have will be yours forever. Many people think that when some one dies, we have to "move on and forget about them", this is not true. It is very healing to maintain a relationship with your special person, however, this is a different relationship, and it requires that you engage in personally significant rituals in your loved one's memory. Talk, pray, write, find or create a special place where you can take yourself to feel close to your loved one.

Take some time now to sit quietly and think about your special person, to reflect on what has been covered in this book, and to just be! Then when you are ready, use this opportunity to **write a letter** to your special person.

"Dear _____

"Love _____"

If the person could write a letter back to you, what do you imagine he/she would say? In the space below, pretend your special person is writing a letter just for you.

"Dear _____

"Love _____"

In the space below, write a *eulogy* in honour of your special loved one.....

(A Eulogy is a short speech, commentary or story about your loved one, in which all their positive and good qualities are mentioned).

There are many ways to remember someone who has died. Creating this memory book is one way, other ways include:

- Donating gifts, money or flowers in your loved one's memory.
- Planting a tree or garden and caring for it
- Visiting the cemetery where the person is buried
- Lighting a candle in memory of the person
- Saving something that belonged to him or her
- Attaching a letter to a helium balloon and sending it off
- Create a memory box of that person in which you will keep sentimental objects and things

What would you like to do to remember the person in your life who has died?

Self-Care.....

It is important that you be kind to yourself during your grief journey. If we do not take the time to care for ourselves, then we will feel even more tired and sad. There are many ways in which we can be kind to ourselves, these can include:

- Doing exercise
- Enjoying time with our friends
- Having fun
- Doing something creative
- Laughing
- Spoiling ourselves
- And most importantly- taking time to think, reflect and to JUST BE!

What could you do to ensure that you are kind to yourself?

Make a promise to yourself that you will do this!

"May you find the courage and wisdom to bear the pain of your loss. As it is often one's greatest loss that that provides for one's greatest growth. May you find comfort and understanding in working through the pain of your grief, as it is only through the process of grief, that we can learn to live with our pain. May you find inner peace in a world that often seems so cruel, so that your loved one can remain in your heart, in your thoughts and in your life forever." These are my wishes for you!

