



This book belongs to



Dedicated to the
memory of...



Acknowledgment & Dedication

My name is Kim Stacey. I am not a clinical psychologist or social worker, but I *do* have some credentials: a Master's degree in Socio-Cultural Anthropology, a Certification in Grief Counseling, and I'm an authorized Funeral Director in California. What's more important to us here, however, is the fact that I am a *mom*. My sons, now grown, helped me to explore the dynamics of childhood grief firsthand.

We've worked our way through the loss of many family members, including their grandmother Denise — using many of the ideas in this journal. It is to them, Paul and Nathan — and let's not forget Grandmother Denise — that I dedicate this collection of ideas and activities.

I hope it helps you through the loss of your loved one, so that one day you will be able to remember them with joy instead of sadness.



What are you feeling?

One of the things that's important to do right now is to really know how you're feeling — and what you're thinking. When we lose someone we love, our thoughts get all jumbled up with our feelings. Here's a chance for you to sort them out, either with the help of your parent or caregiver, or in private. Finish these thoughts...

The thing that makes me feel the saddest is...

If I could talk to my loved one, I would ask...





Since their death, my family doesn't...

My worst memory is...

If I could change things, I...

My favorite thing to do with my loved one was...

When they died, I...

Since my loved one died, my friends...



After they died, school...

When I am alone...

How are you feeling right now?

Circle 5 words to describe the ways your body is reacting to the loss of your loved one. If the words are not listed, then add them to the circle below.



How is your body?



stomach upset

tired

headachy

can't breathe

not hungry

can't sleep

dry mouth

hungry

heavy

shaky

jumpy

pained

ready to throw up



Here's a Picture of My Loved One

If you love to draw, then get out your colored pencils or crayons, and draw a picture of your loved one in the space below. If drawing isn't fun for you, then search through family photos (as permission from your parents first), and simply glue it onto the page.



My Loved One's Story

This is your chance to write down what you know about your loved one's life. Where were they born? Where did they grow up? What interesting things did they do in their lifetime? What were some of the things you did together? Those are just some of the kinds of things you can write about now. Think of this as a celebration of their life and all the love they gave you.



My Best Memory

I have a favorite memory of my father, who died two years ago. When I was a young girl, I would stand on his feet, and we'd dance around the room together. I felt so grown up — and very loved. What's a treasured memory you have of your loved one?



Celebrating My Loved Ones' Life

There are lots of ways to celebrate the many gifts your loved one gave to you and your family. Here are some great suggestions to get you started:

Create an online memorial web page. Many families choose to create an online memorial webpage dedicated to their loved one, and we invite you and your family to do the same. These tributes include videos, pictures, and memory sharing options. Talk to us to learn more.

Plant a memory garden or tree. Plant a tree in your own garden or through a charitable organization such as Treegivers (www.treegivers.com) or Plant a Tree USA (www.plantatreeusa.com) that will do so in your loved one's name, in the state of your choice. Your local parks department might also allow you to plant a tree in a park, in memory of your loved one.

Have your family contribute to a special charity in memory of your loved one. Some times our loved ones tell us the charities they prefer; other times we need to use our best thinking to pick the perfect charity.

Create a Memory Box. Put some of your loved one's treasures like special photos, postcards, or other small personal keepsakes. Be sure to gather your items together ahead of time in order to select a memory box large enough.



Hold a Remembrance Ceremony. A remembrance ceremony is a special time for you to come together with others to share your sadness and celebrate the life of your loved one. When Grandma Denise died all those years ago, we planned a family only event, but you could choose to include others who knew your loved one, like neighbors and special friends. The boys and I — along with their two cousins — picked some bright shiny helium-filled balloons — one for each family member who would attend the ceremony.



We all came together one sunny afternoon at the beach where Grandma Denise loved to walk. We gathered near the rocks where she would sit when she got tired, and we wrote down messages of appreciate, love and hope, and tied those message to the end of each of our balloons. We all walked down to the water's edge, and Grandpa Paul scattered her ashes into the sea. Then, each of us released our balloons, one at a time, after reading each message aloud. And you'll never guess what we did next...



We Had a Picnic on the Beach!

I bet you didn't know this: it's a tradition in many places for grieving families to share a meal together in remembrance of someone who has died.

After we released our balloons, we put out blankets on the sand, and got baskets of food we had prepared earlier, and enjoyed the company of our family while we sat looking out at the sea Grandma Denise loved so much. We all felt really close to her that day.

When we left the beach at sunset, we all decided that we would return there every year, on the anniversary of her death. Today, those yearly picnics look and feel very different. The cousins are grown, and the adults are older. There is less sadness, and more laughter. We all think Grandma Denise would like that...a lot.

Did You Know You Have Rights?

It's true. Lots of very smart people, including your mom and dad, want you to know that you have the birthright (that's something you can do just because you were born!) to grieve the passing of your loved one. You see, human beings naturally have everything we need to heal after they lose someone we love. We can laugh, cry, yell — even sleep is a natural way human beings handle the stress felt when anyone is lost to us.

You're smart too, right? You can cry and feel sad but you can also remember the good days you shared with your loved one, feel happy again, and even laugh at the many memories. We want you to know that you have the **right** to do all those things — and more.

You have the right to:

- your own unique feelings about your loved one's death.
- talk about your sadness whenever you feel like talking.
- show your feelings of grief in your own way, as long as you don't hurt anyone — including yourself — in the process.
- ask grown-ups around you to pay attention to what you are feeling.
- get upset about normal, everyday problems, or to experience sudden, unexpected feelings of sadness.
- ask for help from the adults around you.
- try to figure out why your loved one died.
- think and talk about the memories of your loved one who died.
- move forward with your life, grow strong, and to heal your sadness.



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