

9 WAYS

to Turn Loss into
Transformation



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1 Develop a morning ritual ~

During times of loss it is common to awake in a state of doom. Plan to take some time to remind yourself of grace. Remind yourself that your grief exists in this moment and that there is more than just this moment. There is more than this state of mind or emotion. "This too shall pass."

Some suggestions:

1. Look at pictures of the people that you love.
2. Spend time with a beloved pet.
3. Listen to music or a podcast or a meditation.
4. Go outside and be with nature even if it is cold.

Here is an example of a meditation you can utilize and download if you desire.

brookesorger.com/meditation

Write a poem ~

Don't laugh ... I know that we are not all poets. Write something, anything that is TRUE! Grab a pad and a pen and write your thoughts, your feelings. Don't type it - write it on paper. Let it be messy, even doodle or draw. It can be a letter - whatever suits you. The purpose is to get out cognitions and emotions that are swimming inside of you. It may not make you feel "better" but it may make you feel less burdened.

LET IT FLOW - use a colored pen - something unusual for you. This may better allow for the truth - may allow for expression of an emotion or thought you have been restricting. We are usually burdened by that which we are not "allowed" to feel about the person that has left us - what we don't miss. Simply admitting it can help.

For example:

Dear Mom,

I can't believe that you aren't here. I can't believe you left without really saying good-bye. I thought you would be here forever to help with the kids ... AND ... I am so happy I don't have to talk to you everyday or check in to make sure YOU are OK. I mean I really had nothing to say but thought you would have some kind of deep self-injurious breakdown if you didn't hear from me. And then the guilt ... "I guess you are too busy to even check in for a minute..." That annoyed me - how much more devoted did I need to be. Now I don't have to prove myself to you anymore...

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Include your writing here:

Cook ~

Cook a favorite dish that the person you lost cooked for you. If the person you loved was a horrible cook then make something they made all the time. Or even something that they ate all the time instead of cooking (pasta, p, b + j).

Take your time with the ingredients one at a time... Let your tears (if they are available) flow into them.

Eat your meal slowly and deliberately. Experience the person's love for you. Notice how their love and your experience of them is still with you... and that it is not lost. Know that you can bring them back each time you share this food with them and your family.

Plan to experience this meal 1x/week. Bring the experience of grief deliberately into your world so you won't fear the pain of it so much. You are actually creating a wave of grief. By doing this deliberately you will feel more in control of your emotional experience when triggered unexpectedly.

Include your tear food recipe here:

4 Read ~ ...

something the person you loved wrote to you.
Put it somewhere you can see it everyday.

Remember his or her voice, their way of speaking,
their words. Hear them again...

Find a quiet place and listen - no matter what
you believe about spirit or about life after death,
allow the possibility that you can still access them.
If they speak to you try speaking back. See if
they answer. Be open to whatever comes.

Death is a mystery. Allow yourself to sit in the
space it resides.

If nothing comes, so be it.

If something comes, so be it.

You still must go on without your love in the flesh..
This is simply an exercise to allow for a new
experience and relationship with death.

Do the laundry, Wash the dishes ~

Life goes on, doesn't it?
After something so profound has happened we still have the laundry to do and the dishes to dry.

How is that possible?

How is it that life goes on so simply?

Actually, that is exactly the lesson that doing the laundry and doing the dishes teaches us after such profound loss: Death is simply a part of life that happens to everyone. It is just like laundry happens and will keep happening...

So, then, why do we resist it? If you are telling yourself that his or her death should not have happened do the laundry and remind yourself it always happens. As long as you are alive and wear clothes, you will have laundry. As long as you are alive and live, you will experience death. The feelings regarding doing the laundry and experiencing death are by no means congruent.

However, I do find that acceptance of death creates less suffering for those who grieve.

If you begin to understand that you and your loss are part of a larger experience, that all humans endure as a whole, you can move with your grief, rather than against it.

That which we resist persists - including death...

Plant a tree, nourish it, and watch it grow ~

Well, not necessarily a real tree ... it can be, if you happen to have a green thumb and a wonderful garden. Or it can be a plant that you purchase and take care of in your living room. Then water it, feed it, and watch it change and grow.

It will grow no matter what as long as it is cared for in the way that it "needs". Follow the instructions from the nursery. If it gets more water than it needs it will die. If it gets less it will die. Otherwise, if you offer it what it needs it will grow as it is naturally programmed to do.

It is the same with you. You will grow as long as you get what you need. We are naturally programmed to endure death. Yet we must be aware of what we need or we will wilt and become depressed, physically ill, etc...

Often when people are hurting others feel the need to fix them. They may tell you what you "need" to do. In fact - that is often what they need or what they needed when they were in a similar situation.

What do you need? Perhaps you don't know.

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

When are you most at ease right now?

When you are alone? When you are with others?

Both? Does it depend on the day?

Well, here lies your personal prescription. If you feel "better" one way over another that tells you what you "need." It tells you how much to water yourself.

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If you feel as though you are wilting in any particular circumstance that tells you it isn't what you need. Be careful. Our mind can play tricks so pay attention to your heart:

How do you feel when you are alone?

How do you feel when you are with others?

Push yourself to go out if you know you will feel better when you get there. But do not if you feel best when you are alone.

For example: If you lost a partner people may say "you need to get back out there" or "you are dating too soon."

No one is you and no one wrote the rules on past loss dating.

You must do what YOU need or YOU will WILT!

In all circumstances: $\frac{1}{3}$ of the world is going to agree with you.

$\frac{1}{3}$ of the world is going to disagree with you.

$\frac{1}{3}$ of the world will not care at all.

So: Do what you need to do. If you don't know what you need then try on different desires. See how they feel.

Watch for wilting with you and your plant and calibrate the watering for both of you...

Feed the hungry —

Go and do something to remind you that no matter how bad that you feel right now there is someone out there that is in a worse situation than you.

No matter how bad we feel there is always someone better off than us and always someone worse off than us. That is simply the human condition. When we compare ourselves to those who are in better circumstances we feel worse. When we compare ourselves to those who feel worse we feel better.

So... go somewhere to bare witness to another who is in greater suffering than you. You may be rejecting this idea... you may feel like you are benefitting at another's expense. Perhaps this is true. Yet, they will be suffering either way and maybe it would even lift their spirit to know they could help someone.

In addition, providing service to others when we are in pain often lifts us. We remain capable of helping others despite our conditions. It helps us to save another when we are in pain. Try it...

Reach out ~

ASK for what you need, especially to those who you know really support and care about you...

People often tell me that they don't know what to say to or do for those who are dying or grieving. My response is always that those who are hurting know they are hurting. As a result, you will not surprise them or make them sad by expressing your feelings.

Others are uncertain of what you need from them. Should they call or not? Should they take you out or leave you alone. You need to tell them. People can be very uncomfortable about illness and death. This is not personal to you. So you may need to be the one to approach them. This may seem counterintuitive but will serve you better. Again tell them what you need.

Call them if they have yet to call you. They may simply not know what to say. And if you don't know what to say but desire to reach out - do that. Explain that you do not know what you need but that you will tell them when you do. The people in your inner circle will appreciate knowing what to do even if it is "nothing."

Live ~

What does that mean?

What did it mean before you lost your loved one?

Who were you before the person you loved died?

You are still that person.

What did you like to do before that person died?

You still like to do those things...

Death does not change whether you like chocolate or vanilla. Death may change the way you feel about living but it doesn't change the essence of who you are...

Live - do what you love ...