

Writing as a Way of Dealing

with grief and loss

~excerpts

In 2005 when my son, Jeff, aged 19, was killed in a traffic collision, his death was so sudden and unexpected that in addition to the shock and grief one normally associates with the death of a loved one, I felt a huge void over no longer being able to simply talk with him. He was a college student who still lived at home and like most college students, he worked afternoons and into the evening. We found time to talk every day and when our time was taken away, I felt the need to “get it out.” Writing seemed the most logical way. I began writing within days of Jeff’s death.

The most helpful resource has been a book I purchased from Willowgreen.com entitled *The Rewarding Practice of Journal Writing* by James E. Miller. Here are some suggestions for journaling from the book that I found helpful:

Develop your own routine.

- Morning? Evening? Daily? Weekly?
- Find the rhythm that works for you.

Make it easy to express yourself in writing.

- Write in your own natural, genuine way.
- Give yourself permission, if you can, to forget about misspellings, grammatical mistakes, etc.
- Guard the privacy of your journal.

As much as possible, express whatever is within you.

- Don’t hold back. Write what you think and feel; be whoever you are.
- Be reflective if you wish; contemplate.
- This is the place to express your feelings about anything and everything.
- You have suffered a loss; this is your place to verbalize anger, sadness, etc.

Allow your journaling to lead you.

- Follow your inner urgings as you write, whether you understand them at the moment or not.
- Listen to your inner voice; meditate or pray before you begin.

Write honestly.

- It may be hard to write what’s true.
- Some feelings are painful to acknowledge.

Give pen to your soul.

- A journal allows you to write from yourself to yourself and that can be the first step in communicating beyond yourself.

Experiment.

- It is okay and even good to “color outside the lines” in your journal.
- If you are a freeform writer, try writing poetry.

Go back through your journal from time to time.

- Reviewing your past writings will reveal much about how far you have come.

Writing can be very therapeutic. It provides an outlet. Anger, kept inside, becomes stress. After four plus years, I no longer write every day. I don’t feel guilty about not writing daily any longer; I take it as a sign my grief is changing.

By Claude Sampson,
Donor Father of Jeff Sampson
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A Note from Judy, Editor:

Ideally, it would be great to start a journal from Day 1 as Claude Sampson did. But, you can start a journal anytime: one year after your loss or five years or 10 years. As the rules of our grief journal say, there are no rules. If you are at any point of your grief journey, write from the heart...”I wish I knew to write down my feelings long ago, but I am still on the grief journey and this is how I feel now, X amount of years later...”



A Solitary Journey

Grief is a solitary journey. No one but you know the gaping hole left in your life when someone you know has died. And no one but you can mourn the silence that was once filled with laughter and song. It is the nature of love and of death to touch every person in a totally unique way. Comfort comes from knowing that people have made the same journey. And solace comes from understanding how others have learned to sing again.

By Helen, Reflections TCF, WA
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