



Grief Rituals

The value of creating “Grief Rituals” is to help us remember our loved ones in loving, healing ways and with a sense of peace. Too often bereaved individuals feel they must “hold on” to pain, seemingly forever, as a way of remembering those they love. Practicing Grief Rituals in a personal way can help you bring closure to painful situations or memories, freeing you to make your memories a positive influence in your life. Some examples of helpful grief rituals are listed below.

- Buy a very special candle and light it at times that are important to your loved one’s memory (birthday, Father/Mother’s Day, anniversaries, etc.)
- Write special notes or letters and let them go attached to a balloon or burn them outside, watching the smoke rise. Let balloons go with a special prayer or wish to your loved one.
- Help feed the hungry/homeless on special days, or assist in peripheral ways those who are experiencing situations similar to what you have experienced.
- Create a scrapbook of memories and photos - a memory book.
- Keep a journal of your experiences, memories, and hopes for the future, or letters to your loved one.
- Donate gifts, food, quilts, etc. in your loved one’s name.
- Plant a strong, healthy tree or flowering bush in the memory of your loved one.
- Find a special tree in the mountains, woods or a park, tie a yellow ribbon around it, and visit it frequently. (This is especially significant when ashes have been scattered and there is no gravesite.)
- Offer a scholarship in your loved one’s name.
- On birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays, buy your loved one a gift and then donate it to a hospital, nursing home, etc.
- Invite someone special to sit in your loved one’s chair at a special meal (possibly someone without a family).
- Make a teddy bear, other stuffed toy or pillow out of a favorite shirt or soft piece of clothing belonging to your loved one.
- Make ornaments, wall hangings, or other decorations from jewelry and nick-knacks belonging to your loved one.
- Listen to some favorite music of your loved one’s, or music that reminds you of him/her, to help you feel near to them.
- Celebrate their life by continuing favorite traditions or eating favorite foods, etc.

Sometimes we had relationships with those who have died that we wish could have been different.

Some Grief Rituals to help situations like this are:

- Collect things that represent or are symbols of hurtful or painful situations, events, or feelings from your past and do a little funeral for yourself where you bury or burn them, saying good-bye and releasing them.
- Help someone in a way that you would have liked to be helped by your loved one.
- Relive the details of a special event as you would have liked it to be, instead of how it happened. Pamper and care for yourself as you would have liked to be treated by your loved one.
- Acknowledge with a mutual friend or family member the removal of a negative influence in your life and make an agreement to break the destructive patterns.
- Give yourself a gift from your loved one that you always wished they would have given you.