



Dear Bereaved,

Talking with a trusted friend is a good way to deal with the feelings of loss and grief. However, there are times when a supportive person is not available. Who do you talk to in the middle of the night when you have been tossing and turning restlessly for hours, or at 5:00 a.m. when you awake unable to get back to sleep? There may also be times during the day when you feel too confused or upset to speak to anyone else about your feelings. In such circumstances, writing about your thoughts and feelings may be helpful.

The enclosed material may help guide you in keeping a personal journal. If you are someone who finds writing a natural mode of expression, you may already be keeping a journal. However, if you find writing to be difficult, learning a few simple techniques can make a big difference. Remember, if you do keep a journal, it is for you alone and no one else needs to read it. Writing can be a valuable tool in helping you to “work” through those thoughts and feelings which can ultimately lead to healing. Writing can help.

Please remember that you can contact us with your concerns, questions, or comments at any time. We’d also like you to know we offer writing groups several times a year. Feel free to call if you’d like more information about these groups or visit our web site www.pathways-care.org.

Sincerely,

Margaret Hartsook
Grief Counselor

Nancy Jakobsson
Director of Pathways for Grief and Loss

Amanda Hillman
Grief Counselor

Renee Baker
Grief Counselor

Keeping a Personal Journal

One of the most useful means for long-term self-development is the systematic use of an ongoing workbook, diary or journal. Such a journal, thoughtfully done, can provide structure to assist us in paying closer attention to our lives and in evoking or developing our understanding of others and ourselves. It acts as a “reflector” of the inner course we are charting day by day, and can give us the stimulation and support, which many seek, from the outside world.

The purpose of journal writing is to afford you the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning and the significance of events in your life as they apply to your inner self.

The focus of journal writing is on your unfolding awareness of the new meanings, values and interrelationships you are discovering in yourself and the world.

The value of journal writing comes in the act of presenting your ideas and feelings on paper. This forces you to formulate and clarify your thoughts and their accompanying feelings. Thus, enhancing the power and precision of your thinking.

Once you record your ideas on paper, you do not have to be preoccupied with thoughts of losing them. The writing makes “room” for new avenues of thinking that you may not have had time to previously consider.

Writing is an effective yet harmless way of “letting off steam” by providing you with a “fully accepting friend” who allows you to discharge your tensions and to vent all of your powerful and disruptive emotions.

The forms your journal may take include:

- A narrative account of your ongoing experience.
- Drawings, painting, diagrams or other visual materials that are useful in clarifying or expressing your ideas.
- Illustrations from magazines or newspapers, which capture the thought or image you are writing about.
- Personally meaningful quotations you may have heard or read. A section entitled “Bright Ideas” may help you to brainstorm about alternatives and bright ways to view things.
- An inner dialogue (an imaginary conversation) between yourself and any other significant person or important event in your life will help you to clarify relationships and to develop understanding and insight into your problem.

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Sara Unobskey Miller*

Ideas for Journal Writing

You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your loved one by writing about your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to the person who died, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following issues:

- A special memory that I have about you...
- What I miss the most about you and our relationship...
- What I wish I'd said or hadn't said...
- What I wish we'd done or hadn't done...
- What I've had the hardest time dealing with...
- Ways in which you will continue to live on in me...
- Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive...

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you or start at the top of this list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas specific to your situation and relationship.