

Tossed Pebbles

A Grief Journal



Rev. Lee M. Atherton

Artwork by Elizabeth "Betty" Burke

“It is only when there is chaos within that you can give birth to a shining star.” Frederick Nietzsche

For Dad, who taught me to love life,
look for the best, and be yourself.

For RLN, James, Katie, & Charlotte
My cheerleaders in all times.

For Deborah and Donna
Your love, friendship, encouragement, and support have helped CoachRev grow and become the exciting endeavor it is today.

I couldn't have done it without all of you.

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**“A ship is safe in harbor, but
that's not what ships are for.”
- William G.T. Shedd**

At times you may feel truly alone in your grief. You want to just stay home, curled up with your favorite blanket and a hot cup of tea. We often find comfort and security in doing such things. When is the last time you treated yourself to an ice-cream or a walk in the woods? There are so many ways to feel part of the greater world around you.

Today, do one thing outdoors that you find pleasure in. Even if you do not feel your usual happiness in doing it, it will be a step toward healing.

What are you finding most difficult to do?

Who or what do you need to support you?



**“Tears are a river that takes you somewhere. Tears lift your boat off the rocks, off dry ground, carrying it downriver to someplace better.”
~Clarissa PinkolaEstés**

There may be days when you find yourself crying as much as you did when you first experienced your loss. A smell or a song, seeing something she would have loved; running across a mutual friend, many things will remind you of your loved one. These can bring your loss to the forefront as if it just happened yesterday. It’s okay to cry again. Crying is natural, and still having periods where you cry a lot is not unusual. Give yourself the chance to let your pain out and healing will continue.

What things have you that make you cry most?

What do you wish you could say to your loved one in those moments?



“It didn’t help when he told David that his mother would always be with him, even if he couldn't see her. An unseen mother couldn't go for long walks with you on summer evenings, drawing the names of trees

and flowers from her seemingly infinite knowledge of nature; or help you with your homework, the familiar scent of her in your nostrils as she leaned in to correct a misspelling or puzzle over the meaning of an unfamiliar poem, or read with you on cold Sunday afternoons around the fire.”

~John Connolly

People say the worst things at times of death. Not because they mean to hurt you in any way, but because most do not know the “right” thing to say. Try to be patient and know that their words come from care for you and an effort to offer support.

What have been the most helpful things people have said to you?

It is important and helpful to express all of grief’s emotions. What are the ones you haven’t let go of? What would help you feel safe enough to express them?



“We live and we die, but we are made of sterner stuff. The carbon atoms in our fingernails, the calcium in our bones, the iron atoms in our blood—all the countless trillions of atoms of which we are made—are ancient objects. They existed before

before the earth itself. And after each of us dies, they will depart from our bodies and do other things. Forever.” ~ Keith HeyerMeldahl, *Hard Road West: History and Geology Along the Gold Rush Trail*

The people we love are never really gone. You might suddenly see your loved one’s favorite bird or flower outside the window. You will be certain you heard him call from the other room. Some will dream beautiful dreams of their loved ones. Take time to be aware of the world around you and see those things that bring you closest to him or her.

What do you see around you that reminds you of your loved one?

What would your loved one want other people to know about them?

What is your favorite memory of your loved one?



“Grief is like the ocean; it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes it is overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim.” ~Vicki Harrison

Grief is one of the strongest emotions that human beings can experience. Grief can last for hours, days, months, and even years. And at times feel like it will never end. Grief will change you - you will never be the same. Be patient and gentle with yourself.

How have you learned to swim through the ebbs and flows of your grief?

What or who has been most helpful to you in finding peace and calm?



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As time progresses, try to see your memories as a source of empowerment rather than a source of sadness. Rather than the many ways, we tell ourselves we should be over our grief or listening to others who think we should “be over it already,” try sitting still and quiet with your emotions. Let your thoughts come and go as you listen to your inner voice. We often find many gifts within ourselves when we stop long enough to let them show.

What gifts do you find in the stillness?

What surprises you in the stillness?



“Grief can be the garden of compassion. If you keep your heart open through everything, your pain can become the greatest ally in your life’s search for love and wisdom.” ~Rumi

You will feel things in ways you have not felt before. Grief changes things. Guilt, sadness, despair, anxiety, longing, fear, hopelessness will all take on a new meaning. You need to express those feelings even when it is uncomfortable to do so. But always remember that the intensity is only for right now. This gives you hope that feelings will be different later. Permit yourself to be where you are right now knowing that it will not be this way forever.

In what ways have you expressed your feelings?

What has been helpful?



“I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge. That myth is more potent than history. That dreams are more powerful than facts. That hope always triumphs over experience.

That laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death.” ~Robert Fulghum

Eventually, you will love sunny days again. Be patient. Do not push yourself. Like so many other phases of grief, your return to the sunshine will come when you are ready.

When did you last laugh? What did you laugh about?

Where have you found glimmers of hope?

What do you dream?



**“If tears could build a stairway,
and memories a lane, I'd walk
right up to Heaven and bring you
home again.” ~Author Unknown**

As time goes by, you will feel more and more in control of your feelings. The day will come when you realize you have not cried or been filled with sadness for quite a while. Take a moment, today, to be aware of the beauty around you. It might be a fresh flower in bloom or the face of an excited child. Although you can never replace what or who has died, there is still much beauty in the world.

What beauty surrounds you today?

Describe your “stairway.”



**“A beautiful, colorful rainbow could not exist if it were not for the rain of a grey day – it was born from the very droplets of it.”
~Author Unknown**

In the darkest days of grief, it is completely normal to feel that these images of growth and newness, and the hope and strength they are offering just do not seem possible. Sometimes these words of encouragement not only sound hollow and empty, but they can also be painful. A time will come when you begin to see hope in your future. It is important to be open to the idea of a better day ahead.

Describe a time you felt hopeful?

Write a list of activities you can engage in to make yourself feel better.

What have you learned about yourself since your loved one died?



“A life with love will have some thorns, but a life without love will have no roses.” ~Anonymous

It is common to compare the before and the after of losing a loved one. His or her death changes shape from a huge, inconceivable moment that overtakes your life, to something easier flowing without the sharp corners and edges that are so painful. Eventually, your mind settles, and a new routine sets in as you absorb, adjust, evaluate and, in time learn to cope with your new life.

What do you notice about “before” and “after” the death of your loved one?

Where have you found the opportunity to nurture your heart in new ways?

What new routines have you created or want to create?



“Death ends a life, not a relationship.” ~Mitch Albom

There will be times you mourn the person you were before your loved one died. Do something special—lunch with a friend, tea and a favorite movie, your favorite hobby—and take a photograph of yourself. Building new memories will not replace the memories of your love, but they will help you create your new way of living.

What outings have you been on since your loved one died? What was it like to do that?

What is something you and your loved one enjoyed doing together?

What do you need to pack in your “picnic basket” for your next journey?