



# The Grieving Journey

from Greene County Council on Aging Spring 2022

## **Grief is a natural and normal reaction to loss.**

Grief manifests itself in many ways. The feelings one may experience include: shock, yearning, numbness, depression, sadness, anger, guilt, anxiety, loneliness, fear, helplessness, low self-esteem, peacefulness, or relief. Feelings may be closer to the surface and at times overwhelm the person grieving when least expected. Feelings of isolation may occur even when others are around.

**Physical symptoms include:** Hollowness in the stomach or upset stomach, tightness of the throat or chest, shortness of breath, dry mouth, headaches, cold chills, hot flashes, dizziness, sensitivity to noise, weakness, or fatigue.

**Cognitive symptoms include:** Disbelief that the death has happened, difficulty with concentration, confusion, preoccupation, feeling like you are losing your mind. A sense of the deceased's presence – spiritual, visual, physical, or auditory – a sense of accompaniment.

**Changes in Behavior include:** Sleep disturbances, change in appetite, absent-mindedness, social withdrawal, dreams, avoidance of memories, searching or calling out, sighing, restlessness, crying. Many people who are grieving want to spend more quiet time alone. Others try to stay busy in efforts to avoid thinking of the loss.

*The Grieving Journey is a Greene County Council on Aging quarterly publication to accompany you in your time of bereavement after the loss of a significant person in your life.*

The memories.  
And there you are.  
Miles of memories, placed end to end  
that stretch across the landscape of  
my years.  
Good times merge with sad  
and both survive.  
Yesterday is now  
Never dying only changing form.  
Memories of moments and memories  
full-length,  
The sound of your voice, the rich laughter,  
The smile, the way you say my name.  
The stories, the holidays, the wisdom,  
the fun.  
Now, what is, isn't  
but what was, will always be.  
The memories,  
and there you are.  
And every time you greet me with love.  
Mama Kehoe Bigger

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## Thinking Back

After my husband died, I was reluctant to get rid of his clothing. There was no rush, so I did it slowly, and I *mean* slowly. Sometimes I would find myself standing in front of his closet just looking and touching his shirts, pants, and sweaters – remembering what he looked like when wearing each item. One day I pulled a few pairs of pants off their hangers and folded them up. That’s all. That’s all I could do before bursting into tears.

A week or so later I went into the closet and pulled a few more pairs of pants out. While I was fondling the clothes, I buried my face in his shirts seeking the scent of him. I decided to wear one of his shirts just so I could then put it in the laundry and wash, dry, and fold it. I missed seeing his clothes mixed in with mine in the laundry, so I found a way to make them appear in the wash now and then. This may all sound... odd, but when a spouse dies their absence is so huge that one

looks for ways to keep them present, even in the small mundane things.

I eventually whittled down his wardrobe to the articles of clothing that were my favorites – the things that I liked seeing him wear, and I kept those items. In the months and few years to come, each time I went through his clothes, I was ready to eliminate one or two more items. I kept a couple of his shirts for about 5 years and eventually let them go. Enough time had gone by that his scent was no longer present and seeing photos of him wearing those shirts was enough.

When we are grieving the loss of a loved one, little things become pregnant with meaning. Each step forward feels like we are leaving our loved one behind, but we aren’t. We are moving forward, however slightly, one tear at a time, one step at a time, one day at a time, all-the-while their presence transcends and remains strong within our mind and heart.

## GCCOA Grief Support Group

Group meetings are open to all those who have lost a loved one. Meetings are on the second Monday of each month from 10am until noon at the Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton Xenia Road, Beavercreek (lower level). Participation is limited and advance registration is required. Please call the Council to learn more.

We hope you find this publication helpful, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues.  
Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.

