

HOMICIDE SURVIVORS, INC.

REFLECTIONS OF GRIEF AND LOSS

VIRTUAL WRITING SERIES

Reflections of Grief and Loss writing series is designed to help Survivors of Homicide put their thoughts on paper and address concerns and struggles about grief.



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INTRODUCTION

Grieving is often a lonely and frightening experience. Most of us have little idea of what to expect along the way. We often find ourselves making others comfortable when we most need to be heard and cared for. Relationships shift. Nothing is the same again. However, self-care is so important after a loss.

Reflections of Grief and Loss writing series is designed to help put your thoughts on paper and address the concerns and struggles you may have about grieving. As well as better understand the essential value of your feelings, honoring your personal stories, and integrating your past and present realities into a new chapter of life. This writing series is for you and about you. Together we can navigate the ebbs and flows of grief. Together we can heal; you are not alone.

Benefits of Expressive Writing

According to a study done by [Cambridge University](#), writing about traumatic events has improved physical and psychological health. Expressive writing can reduce stress, anxiety, and depression; improve our sleep and performance. When used as a tool, expressive writing can help improve your mood; and bring us greater focus and clarity as you move forward in your healing journey.

Objectives

- To provide a safe place to share our stories, move from isolation to connection, and from judgment to compassion.
- Work through our fears, anger, and shame to be more open to love, joy, and self-kindness.
- To further understand the grieving process of old and current losses.
- To learn the use of healthy emotions to live more fully in the present to create a life that honors your loved one.
- To find balance in our physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual lives.



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GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

Remember to be gentle with yourself. If you feel overwhelmed, take a break and try this 54321 Grounding Exercise to help reduce trauma triggers and other unwanted emotions or thoughts.

Instructions: Sitting or standing, take a deep breath in, and complete the following questions.

5 things you can see



4 things you can touch



3 things you can hear



2 things you can smell



1 thing you can taste



A CHANGED LIFE

Losing a loved one to homicide is a painful and daunting experience. It abruptly changes your life and disrupts daily routines. As you navigate the rocky terrain of grief, remember that your loved one gave your life significant meaning and purpose. This 'new' chapter in your life is incomprehensible yet you can feel its weight on your soul. Take a moment to reflect on how your sorrow is a tribute to the love you have for your person.



Anyone who has lost a loved one in such a tragic way will be impacted for the rest of their life. In such a way, they're never going to be the same.

– Fernanda Mendoza | Survivor



Affirmation: My loved one's life had meaning. Their passing doesn't break our bond. I will let this thought guide me through the changes that death has brought.

Things I can reflect on...

- A happy memory I have of the two of us
- What my loved one's life meant to me
- Another time in my life when change was painful

FEELING UNPREPARED

Although death is an inevitable part of the cycle of life, we will never be prepared to lose our person to homicide. Homicide Grief is complex; it shocks and surprises us. Can we be prepared? Maybe? Take a moment to identify ways, tools, or techniques that help you when overwhelmed and help you find some clarity.

“As Survivors, we never had the privilege of preparing ourselves for this loss. It’s okay to feel scared to move on.

– Fernanda Mendoza | Survivor



Affirmation: My loved one’s death is incomprehensible; I will give myself time to sort out my thoughts and beliefs. I will take time to practice self-kindness when overwhelmed.

Things I can reflect on...

- A kind gesture someone made to comfort me
- What it means to me to be prepared
- The fears that I’ve felt since my loved one’s death

LACK OF CONCENTRATION

With most of your energy expended on grieving, your mind naturally loses its ability to concentrate and stay focused. You may find yourself on "Auto Pilot" as you are preoccupied with your loved one's death. It's important to recognize that focusing on your loss mentally, physically, and emotionally is a normal part of trauma. Be gentle with yourself.

“As you know, when you lose someone, time changes. It feels like it was just a day ago, but it also feels like a lifetime ago. Time has no meaning anymore.

– April Barbosa | Survivor



Affirmation: My loved one's death preoccupies my thinking and drains my energy, but I know it is normal to feel overwhelmed by loss. I will embrace the journey and be gentle with myself.

Things I can reflect on...

- A specific instance of being “on automatic pilot”
- Something I want to say to my loved one
- The frustration of not being able to concentrate

THE RIGHT TO GRIEVE

How often have people tried to help you as you grieve and say all the wrong things? When someone we love dies, a variety of emotions will surface. There's no need to justify your feelings because there are no terms or conditions on who can grieve or for how long. We all have the right to grief. Your feelings are your own and are not something that can, or should, be taken away.

“Being around those who have felt a similar pain, you feel more like yourself; you don't feel like you are making others uncomfortable talking about your loved one. It's nice to know that others understand where you're coming from and know that you will never be the same person you once were when you had your loved one on earth.

– Aliyah Vasquez| Survivor



Affirmation: No one can tell me how long my pain will last. I allow myself to feel this fully. I have a right to my grief. I will find healthy ways to express my feel.

Things I can reflect on...

- A possession I have that belonged to my loved one
- A strong memory I have of them
- How it hurts when others ignore my pain

GRIEVING MY OWN WAY

It may be hard on our friends and family to see you heartbroken and hurting for what seems to them like a long time. They may want you to get better as quickly as possible. However, their timetable and understanding of grief do not need to be yours. We are all entitled to have our grief. Take a moment to identify healthy ways to set healthy boundaries with people who want you to 'Get over it'.

“Setting boundaries is also important. It is ok to say, “I am not ready to discuss,” if you don’t want to talk about your loved one’s death or the details of their murder that people seem to want to know.

– Bernadette Smith-Hirsch | Survivor



Affirmation: I can respect the feelings of others and still honor my own. I appreciate that my family and friends want to see me in less pain, but I am on my own journey of hope and healing.

Things I can reflect on...

- A card or note of condolence I received that felt supportive
- A coping strategy I am using to deal with my sadness and pain
- My thoughts and reactions when others try to take away my grief

LOVE FINDS A WAY

Many sights, sounds, and smells remind us of our loved ones. At that moment, we often find ourselves smiling, tearing up or both. While we may miss the life we shared with our loved ones, we are grateful for the simple objects and mementos that remind us of our shared life. We must trust that our message of love and connection found its way to our loved one's hearts .

“ *What better way to honor and remember our loved ones ... than to make their favorite foods, share our favorite stories about them, & live our lives in a way that would make them proud. We can embrace the tears and sadness & pull ourselves up and remind each other to celebrate & honor them.*

– Monique Vallery | Survivor



Affirmation: I miss the familiar pattern of my loved one's life but I know the message of my love can be carried through to eternity. Today, I choose love.

Things I can reflect on...

- A unique object or item that I have saved in the memory of my loved one
- The message of love I want my loved one to hear
- The pain of missing my loved one

THE HURT OF REMEMBERING

It may hurt to recall the life we once shared with our loved ones. Sometimes we may even feel that the kind of happiness we once had can never exist again. It is as if all joy is forever gone. Remember that your loved one's life is part of your life and no one can take away those moments you shared.

“*I'm still learning to get past the dark days all alone. Yet many nights here without you, I wake up to screaming out loud, with a screeching moan. This is a never-ending nightmare this has torn me in half.*

– Laura Salas Rodriguez | Survivor



Affirmation: Sometimes, it is painful to remember the life I shared with my loved one. I will draw strength from knowing that our lives are forever intertwined.

Things I can reflect on...

- A humorous story that involved my loved one
- An aspect of our relationship that I miss
- My worries of never being happy again

LIFE ON HOLD

When a loved one dies, the familiarity of our old life is overlooked and replaced with feelings of loneliness and emptiness. Ones' dreams, hopes, and plans for the future may have evaporated. For the time being, life seems to be on hold. Though we know that our life must go on, our hearts cannot bear such a reality. To heal, we must let our hearts slowly mend. take a moment to identify small actions you can take to help you heal.

“ I'm learning! Over the many years since Jaron died, I've found that what I do sometimes changes or maybe even disappears. Letting go of certain habits was at first very difficult ... And then I found that even rituals can adapt and be reimagined, with positive consequences.

– Joan Gilbert | Survivor



Affirmation: I choose to focus my thoughts and energy on the things I can control. I choose the path of least resistance as I know that my life will never be the same.

Things I can reflect on...

- Something I want to fulfill in memory of my loved one
- A phrase or saying that inspires me and gives me a sense of hope
- How discouraged I feel when I think about creating a new future

FEAR OF ADDITIONAL TRAGEDY

After a sudden, violent loss, you may feel vulnerable and experience a loss of your sense of safety. You may try to exert more control over your life as you worry and fear further tragedy to gain assurance that you, or others around you, will not suffer further harm. Your desire to control your world is understandable. For now, this may be how you can feel comfortable and safe. Take inventory of whom you can talk to when these fears arise and of any helpful methods that can help you stay grounded and calm, such as breathwork and affirmations.

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"I am learning to lean on my spiritual faith, to actively trust and to surrender to the present moment"

– Anonymous | Survivor



Affirmation: I will work to manage my fears and replace them with feelings of safety and comfort. Every breath I inhale calms my mind. Every breath I exhale helps release tension.

Things I can reflect on...

- Something my loved one taught me about my own inner strength
- Wanting to be safe and protected from further harm
- Vulnerability that comes with knowing that many things are out of my control

WE NEVER STOP LOVING THEM

When a loved one dies, many of us feel vulnerable and fear further tragedy. We worry that we've been singled out for disaster, and we react by trying to exert more control over our world. We want some assurance that we will not suffer further harm. Our desire to control our world is understandable. For now, this may be how we are able to feel comfortable and safe.

“We as survivors can gather our pain to let others know it's not impossible to live life remembering our loved ones. Let's embrace who they were here on earth by leaving a footprint and making a difference.

– Fernanda Mendoza | Survivor



Affirmation: I have the right to love forever. I will never forget my loved one. I am grateful for the gift of my loved one's existence. I will honor and remember them always.

Things I can reflect on...

- A bittersweet memory I have of my loved one
- A feeling I've felt coming up a lot lately
- What are two creative ways I can honor my person

HOLDING ON TO HOPE

Hope gives us strength when we are grieving. Sometimes it is the only thing that enables us to wake each day, get out of bed, put one foot in front of the other, and go about our daily activities. Hope lights our way through the dark and lonely alleyways of our grief. With hope as our companion, we will survive.

“After all that I've been through, fought for & survived I have learned that I can thrive by accepting myself entirely. I have used so many different ways of coping and they all served their purpose during those times; to numb out. Today, I recognize that I can thrive by letting myself feel. I am angry, in pain & feel a deep sadness for losing my brother to homicide. I will always miss my brother and I choose to honor his life by living the best life I can.

– Celina Villegas | Survivor



Affirmation: I will hold on to hope. I am a survivor. I will make the most of my life and honor that of my loved one. I choose to embrace today with hope, courage, and love.

Things I can reflect on...

- A recent incident or experience that has given me hope for my future
- Helpful words of advice that I have received over the last few months
- What is one way I can celebrate my loved one's memory

MEMORIES OF THE HEART

Life will never be the same. As you remember your loved ones, there will always be regrets, sorrow, and a longing to have had more time. Your memories are your bond with your loved ones. Though you will always grieve, you will also always remember the moments you shared, and in this way, you'll always be together.

“Each of our stories is different. Each of our healing will be different. What works for me may not work for you. But do not be scared to heal. Do not be scared to live. Do it in memory of the ones you have lost.

– April Barbosa | Survivor



Affirmation: I will hold on to hope. I will make the most of my life and honor that of my loved one. I choose to embrace today with hope, courage, and love. I am a survivor.

Things I can reflect on...

- My need for alone time to practice self-care
- How I want others to remember my loved one
- The way my loved one had a way of making me feel
