



UNDERSTANDING GRIEF: EARLY WEEKS TRACKER & JOURNAL GUIDE

Gentle Tools for Navigating Fresh Loss



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MEMORIAL MERITS
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UNDERSTANDING GRIEF: EARLY WEEKS TRACKER & JOURNAL GUIDE *Gentle Tools for Navigating Fresh Loss*

INTRODUCTION

Grief is overwhelming, unpredictable, and often feels unmanageable. This guide provides simple tools to help you:

- Track what you're experiencing (so you know you're not losing your mind)
- Express emotions when words are hard to find
- Care for yourself gently during impossible days
- Recognize patterns in your grief journey

There is no "right" way to use this guide.

- Use it daily, weekly, or whenever you need it
- Skip sections that don't help
- Write as much or as little as feels right
- Come back to it when you're ready

This is for you. Use it in whatever way serves you.

UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING

Today's Date: _____

How many days/weeks since the loss: _____

[Memorial Merits | Clear Guidance Through Impossible Times](https://memorialmerits.com/understanding-grief-the-early-weeks-after-loss/)

Read the full guide at: <https://memorialmerits.com/understanding-grief-the-early-weeks-after-loss/>

EMOTIONAL CHECK-IN

Check all emotions you're feeling right now or felt today:

☐ Sadness or emptiness ☐ Anger or rage ☐ Guilt or regret ☐ Anxiety or fear ☐ Numbness or disconnection ☐ Relief (if applicable) ☐ Confusion or disorientation ☐ Longing or yearning ☐ Calm moments ☐ Unexpected joy or laughter ☐ Overwhelm ☐ Other:

The strongest emotion right now is:

If you could describe how you feel in one sentence:

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS TRACKER

Check any physical symptoms you're experiencing:

☐ Exhaustion or extreme fatigue ☐ Insomnia or sleep problems ☐ No appetite or can't eat ☐ Eating constantly or can't stop eating ☐ Chest pain or tightness (heartache) ☐ Headaches ☐ Muscle tension or body aches ☐ Nausea or stomach issues ☐ Digestive problems ☐ Feeling sick or lowered immunity ☐ Feeling the person's presence ☐ Brief moments of "seeing" or "hearing" them ☐ Other: _____

The physical symptom bothering me most:

I'm taking care of my body by: (even small things count) ☐ Eating something today ☐ Drinking water ☐ Resting or trying to sleep ☐ Moving gently (walking, stretching) ☐ Showering or basic hygiene ☐ Taking my medications ☐ Other:

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MENTAL/COGNITIVE CHECK-IN

Check what you're experiencing mentally:

☐ Can't concentrate or focus ☐ Memory problems or forgetfulness ☐ Difficulty making even simple decisions ☐ Obsessive thoughts about the death ☐ Replaying moments over and over ☐ Disorientation (losing track of time/date) ☐ Trying to make sense of what happened ☐ Brain feels foggy or unclear ☐ Can think more clearly today ☐ Other:

My mind keeps returning to:

BEHAVIORAL OBSERVATIONS

How I've been acting or what I've been doing:

☐ Withdrawing from people ☐ Avoiding social contact ☐ Feeling irritable or snapping at others ☐ Can't sit still or restless ☐ Staying busy to avoid feelings ☐ Looking for the person in crowds or familiar places ☐ Keeping their belongings exactly as they were ☐ Calling their phone to hear their voice ☐ Crying frequently or unexpectedly ☐ Unable to cry even though I want to ☐ Other: _____

GRIEF WAVE TRACKER

Grief comes in waves. Tracking them helps you see patterns.

Today's wave intensity: (circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Manageable Overwhelming

What triggered this wave (if you know): ☐ A specific memory or thought ☐ A song, smell, or sensory reminder ☐ Seeing something that belonged to them ☐ A "first" without them ☐ Running into someone or a place ☐ Anniversary or special date ☐ Random - no clear trigger ☐ Other: _____

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How long did the wave last: ☐ A few minutes ☐ Several hours ☐ All day ☐ Multiple days ☐ Still in it

What helped (if anything):

DAILY SURVIVAL CHECKLIST

Some days survival is enough. Check what you managed today:

BASIC NEEDS

☐ Ate something (anything counts) ☐ Drank water ☐ Slept or rested at some point ☐ Got out of bed ☐ Showered or washed face ☐ Took medications (if applicable) ☐ Changed clothes

COPING

☐ Cried when I needed to ☐ Reached out to someone ☐ Accepted help offered ☐ Moved my body gently ☐ Breathed slowly when overwhelmed ☐ Was gentle with myself ☐ Survived another day

If I managed nothing else today, I: (this counts as success)

JOURNAL PROMPTS FOR GRIEF

Use these prompts when you want to write but don't know what to say. Answer one, some, or none. There are no rules.

EXPRESSING EMOTIONS

Right now I feel...

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The hardest part about today was...

If I could tell you how much this hurts...

What I need right now but can't have is...

The thing nobody understands is...

HONORING YOUR PERSON

What I miss most about you:

A memory that keeps coming back:

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Something I never got to say:

What I want you to know:

A story about you I don't want to forget:

PROCESSING THE LOSS

Things that feel impossible now:

Questions I keep asking:

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What I'm struggling to accept:

Guilt or regrets I'm carrying:

What I wish had been different:

MOMENTS OF LIGHT

A moment today when I felt slightly okay:

Something that made me smile or laugh (it's okay to have these moments):

Someone who showed up for me:

A small thing that helped today:

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ANGER AND FRUSTRATION

I'm angry at...

What feels unfair:

If I could scream, I would say...

FEARS AND WORRIES

I'm afraid that...

I worry about...

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The future feels...

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Week of: _____

OVERALL OBSERVATIONS

This week's hardest moments:

This week's "firsts" without them:

People who helped or showed up:

Things that triggered intense grief:

Small things I managed:

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Compared to last week, I feel: (circle one) About the same Slightly better Worse It varies too much to say

Notes or observations:

SELF-CARE IDEAS (For Days When You Can Function Slightly)

Check off things that might help. Try one if you have energy:

GENTLE ACTIVITIES

☐ Take a short walk outside ☐ Sit in sunlight for a few minutes ☐ Listen to music (theirs or yours) ☐ Look at photos when you're ready ☐ Light a candle for them ☐ Talk to them out loud or in writing ☐ Create something (art, writing, anything) ☐ Watch a comforting show or movie ☐ Take a bath or long shower ☐ Do gentle stretching or yoga ☐ Spend time with a pet ☐ Garden or be in nature

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

☐ Text someone you trust ☐ Call someone who gets it ☐ Meet a friend for coffee (brief is fine) ☐ Join a grief support group ☐ Talk to a therapist or counselor ☐ Let someone sit with you quietly ☐ Share a memory of your person ☐ Ask for a specific kind of help

EMOTIONAL RELEASE

☐ Cry without trying to stop ☐ Write everything you're feeling ☐ Scream into a pillow ☐ Punch a pillow or cushion ☐ Rip up paper ☐ Move your body with emotion ☐ Say everything you need to say out loud

TRACKING TRIGGERS

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Understanding what triggers waves helps you prepare and cope.

Date: _____ Trigger: _____

What happened:

How intense (1-10): _____ How long it lasted: _____

What helped:

Date: _____ Trigger: _____

What happened:

How intense (1-10): _____ How long it lasted: _____

What helped:

Date: _____ Trigger: _____

What happened:

How intense (1-10): _____ How long it lasted: _____

What helped:

LETTERS TO YOUR PERSON

Use this space to write to them when you need to:

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Dear _____,

[illegible]

Call someone you trust: Name: _____ Phone: _____

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When grief feels unbearable, remember:

✓ What you're feeling is normal grief, not losing your mind ✓ Physical symptoms are real responses to emotional pain ✓ Grief doesn't follow stages or timelines ✓ Some days survival is enough ✓ You don't have to grieve "right" ✓ Small efforts at self-care matter ✓ Talking about your person keeps them alive in memory ✓ It's okay to have moments of calm or even joy ✓ Grief comes in waves, not a straight line ✓ You are not alone in this pain ✓ Seeking help is strength, not weakness ✓ This is terrible and normal and survivable ✓ You are doing the best you can

NOTES & REFLECTIONS

Use this space however you need:

[illegible]

Your grief is yours. Honor it. Feel it. Survive it. Be gentle with yourself.

Download more grief support resources at MemorialMerits.com

Read the complete article: [Understanding Grief: The Early Weeks After Loss](#)

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Need to talk right now? Solace is available 24/7 at MemorialMerits.com/solace

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