



NAVIGATING GRIEF IN DAILY LIFE: PRACTICAL PLANNING GUIDE

Strategies for Work, Social Situations, Holidays, and Major Decisions



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MEMORIAL MERITS
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NAVIGATING GRIEF IN DAILY LIFE: PRACTICAL PLANNING GUIDE *Strategies for Work, Social Situations, Holidays, and Major Decisions*

INTRODUCTION

Grief does not pause while you handle everyday responsibilities. This guide helps you navigate work, social situations, holidays, relationships, and decisions while carrying profound loss.

Use this guide to:

- Plan your return to work and manage ongoing workplace challenges
- Prepare for difficult social situations and questions
- Survive holidays and special occasions
- Navigate relationship changes
- Protect yourself from poor decisions during impaired judgment

You're doing the best you can. That's enough.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

My Name: _____

Person I Lost: _____

Date of Loss: _____

Current Date: _____

Time Since Loss: _____

SECTION 1: RETURNING TO WORK

ASSESSING YOUR READINESS

My planned return date: _____

My concerns about returning: ☐ Can't concentrate or focus ☐ Memory problems ☐ Fear of crying at work ☐ Don't have energy for job demands ☐ Worried about coworker reactions ☐

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Don't know what to say to people ☐ Feel guilty working while grieving ☐ Other:

Reasons I'm returning now: (financial, distraction, structure, etc.)

KNOWING YOUR RIGHTS

My employer's bereavement leave policy:

- Days provided: _____
- Already used: _____
- Remaining: _____

Additional leave I can use: ☐ Sick days remaining:

_____ ☐ Vacation days:

_____ ☐ Unpaid leave (FMLA or
other): _____ ☐ Other options:

Accommodations I might request: ☐ Modified schedule (specify):

_____ ☐ Reduced hours temporarily

☐ Work from home options ☐ Adjusted responsibilities ☐ Flexibility for difficult days ☐ Permission to leave if overwhelmed ☐ Other:

HR contact for discussing needs:

- Name: _____
- Email/Phone: _____
- Meeting scheduled: _____

PREPARING TO RETURN

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What I'll communicate to my supervisor:

What I need: ☐ Reduced workload initially ☐ Flexibility for bad days ☐ Modified responsibilities ☐ Permission to take breaks ☐ Understanding about reduced productivity ☐ Other: _____

How much I want to share with coworkers: ☐ Minimal information (just that I experienced loss) ☐ General information (who I lost) ☐ Detailed information (circumstances of death) ☐ Prefer privacy, ask trusted coworker to inform others

Trusted coworker who can help inform others:

- Name: _____

My standard response to condolences:

WORKPLACE SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

Triggers I anticipate at work: ☐ Certain coworkers who remind me of my person ☐ Specific locations in building ☐ Tasks my person and I discussed ☐ Lunch breaks (we used to talk then) ☐ Other: _____

My plan for handling triggers: ☐ Identify private place to go: _____ ☐ Keep tissues accessible ☐ Have friend/family I can text ☐ Permission to leave if needed ☐ Take brief breaks outside

Private spaces I can use if overwhelmed:

1. _____
2. _____

Essential tasks only (first 2-4 weeks back):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

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Non-urgent items that can wait:

Self-care during work: ☐ Take all breaks ☐ Eat lunch away from desk ☐ Leave on time (no overtime initially) ☐ Walk during breaks ☐ Call support person during lunch ☐ Use EAP counseling if available

MANAGING COWORKER INTERACTIONS

For people who avoid me, I will: ☐ Recognize it's their discomfort, not about me ☐ Let it go without taking it personally ☐ Reach out first if I want connection

For inappropriate comments, I can say: ☐ "I'd rather not discuss that" ☐ "That's not helpful to hear" ☐ Simply change the subject ☐ Other:

Coworkers I trust for support:

1. _____ Role: _____
 2. _____ Role: _____
-

LONG-TERM CONSIDERATIONS

Career decisions I'll delay at least 6-12 months: ☐ Quitting job ☐ Major career change ☐ Taking promotion/new role ☐ Other major decisions

How work's meaning has changed for me:

Reevaluate these thoughts: (date 6-12 months from now)

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SECTION 2: MANAGING SOCIAL SITUATIONS

DECIDING WHAT TO ATTEND

Upcoming social events/obligations:

Event 1: _____

- Date: _____
- My energy level: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
- Importance: ☐ Must attend ☐ Should attend ☐ Optional
- Decision: ☐ Attend ☐ Decline ☐ Maybe
- Exit plan if I attend: _____

Event 2: _____

- Date: _____
- My energy level: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
- Importance: ☐ Must attend ☐ Should attend ☐ Optional
- Decision: ☐ Attend ☐ Decline ☐ Maybe

Event 3: _____

- Date: _____
- Decision: ☐ Attend ☐ Decline ☐ Maybe

My polite decline statement:

HANDLING QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

My responses to "How are you?"

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For close people: _____ (Example:
"Struggling but managing day by day")

For acquaintances: _____ (Example:
"Taking it one day at a time")

For casual contacts: _____ (Example: "Getting
through. How are you?")

For intrusive questions about death details:

Boundary statement I can use: ☐ "I'd rather not discuss details" ☐ "That's private" ☐ "I'm not
comfortable talking about that" ☐ Other:

For people who give unhelpful advice:

My response: ☐ Polite acknowledgment then change subject ☐ "I'm handling it my way" ☐
"Thanks, I'll consider that" (then ignore)

For people who compare their losses:

My response: ☐ Brief acknowledgment: "I'm sorry for your loss too" ☐ Then redirect if I don't
have energy for their story

For people who don't know about my loss:

What I'll say when they ask about my person:

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGEMENT

My social media boundaries:

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☐ I've posted publicly about the loss ☐ I prefer to keep it private ☐ I'm taking a break from social media ☐ I'm unfollowing/muting triggering accounts ☐ I've asked people not to tag me in certain posts

Accounts I need to unfollow/mute:

My boundaries about others posting about my loss:

SECTION 3: SURVIVING HOLIDAYS & SPECIAL OCCASIONS

FIRST HOLIDAYS WITHOUT THEM

Upcoming difficult dates:

Holiday/Occasion: _____

- Date: _____
 - Why it will be hard: _____
 - My plan: ☐ Maintain traditions ☐ Modify traditions ☐ Skip it ☐ Create new tradition ☐ Haven't decided yet
 - Who I want with me: _____
 - My exit plan: _____
-

Holiday/Occasion: _____

- Date: _____
 - My plan: _____
 - Support person: _____
-

Holiday/Occasion: _____

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- Date: _____
 - My plan: _____
-

THEIR BIRTHDAY

Date: _____

How I want to mark the day: ☐ Visit grave/memorial site ☐ Do activity they loved ☐ Gather with others who loved them ☐ Spend quiet time with memories ☐ Create memorial (donate, plant tree, etc.) ☐ Take day off work ☐ Other:

People to gather with (if applicable):

DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Date: _____

How I want to mark the day: ☐ Take time off work ☐ Be with supportive people ☐ Spend time alone ☐ Create meaningful observance ☐ Other:

Support I need that day:

HANDLING TRADITIONS

Tradition 1: _____

This tradition was important because:

My decision: ☐ Keep exactly as it was ☐ Modify to:

_____ ☐ Skip this year, revisit later

☐ Create new tradition: _____

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Tradition 2: _____

My decision: ☐ Keep ☐ Modify ☐ Skip ☐ Create new

Tradition 3: _____

My decision: ☐ Keep ☐ Modify ☐ Skip ☐ Create new

HONORING THEM DURING OCCASIONS

Ways I might include or honor them:

☐ Set place at table or display photo ☐ Share memories during gathering ☐ Toast or moment of silence ☐ Light candle ☐ Continue their special tradition/recipe ☐ Make donation in their name ☐ Wear something of theirs ☐ Other:

What feels right to me:

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES FOR CELEBRATIONS

My exit plan from events:

- How I'll leave: _____
- Who can help me leave: _____
- Excuse I can use: _____

Support person who understands I might struggle:

- Name: _____
- Their role: _____

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Safe space for breaks during events:

Permission I give myself: ☐ To cry during celebrations ☐ To leave early ☐ To skip parts of events ☐ To not appear happy ☐ To feel however I feel

SECTION 4: NAVIGATING CHANGED RELATIONSHIPS

RELATIONSHIPS THAT DEEPENED

People who showed up consistently:

1. _____ How they helped: _____
2. _____ How they helped: _____
3. _____ How they helped: _____

How I can acknowledge their support:

RELATIONSHIPS THAT FADED

People who disappeared or pulled away:

1. _____
2. _____

My feelings about this:

What I'm choosing to do: ☐ Accept it reflects their limitations ☐ Let the relationship fade naturally ☐ Reach out to discuss if important relationship ☐ Recognize it's okay to let go

COMMUNICATING MY NEEDS

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What I need from close relationships right now:

☐ Someone to listen without trying to fix ☐ Practical help with tasks ☐ Regular check-ins ☐
Company without needing to talk ☐ Space when I need alone time ☐ Permission to cancel plans
☐ Other: _____

How I'll communicate these needs:

IF I'M IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP

How grief is affecting my relationship:

What my partner needs to understand:

What would help us: ☐ Couples counseling ☐ More communication about needs ☐ Patience
with changed intimacy ☐ Understanding different grief styles ☐ Other:

IF CONSIDERING DATING (After Spouse/Partner Loss)

Am I ready? Honest self-assessment: ☐ I feel guilty about moving forward ☐ I'm not looking
to replace my person ☐ I'm lonely and seeking connection ☐ I feel ready for companionship ☐
I'm not sure but curious ☐ Other thoughts:

I will not rush this decision. I will: ☐ Give myself permission to date when ready ☐ Ignore
others' timelines for me ☐ Be honest with potential partners about my grief ☐ Take it slowly ☐
Reassess periodically

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SECTION 5: PROTECTING AGAINST POOR DECISIONS

UNDERSTANDING MY IMPAIRED JUDGMENT

Ways grief has affected my thinking: ☐ Can't concentrate or focus ☐ Memory problems ☐ Difficulty weighing options ☐ Everything feels overwhelming ☐ Impulse to change everything ☐ Trouble seeing long-term consequences ☐ Other: _____

I recognize my judgment is impaired right now: ☐ Yes

MAJOR DECISIONS TO DELAY

Decisions I will NOT make for at least 6-12 months:

☐ **Selling home or moving**

- Current temptation level: ☐ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High
- Why I'm tempted: _____
- Why I should wait: _____

☐ **Quitting job or major career change**

- Current temptation: _____
- Why I should wait: _____

☐ **Ending important relationships**

- Relationship: _____
- Why I should wait: _____

☐ **Major purchases (house, car, etc.)**

- What I'm tempted to buy: _____
- Why I should wait: _____

☐ **Giving away all their belongings immediately**

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- I will go slowly with possessions
- Items I'll definitely keep: _____

☐ **Other major decision:**

- What: _____
 - Why I should wait: _____
-

DECISIONS THAT CANNOT WAIT

Urgent decisions I must make:

1. _____
 - Help I need: _____
 - Trusted advisor: _____
 2. _____
 - Help I need: _____
-

GETTING HELP WITH DECISIONS

Trusted advisors for different types of decisions:

Financial decisions:

- Name: _____ Contact: _____

Legal decisions:

- Name: _____ Contact: _____

Personal decisions:

- Name: _____ Contact: _____

General life decisions:

- Name: _____ Contact: _____
-

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DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES

When facing a decision:

☐ **Ask myself:** Can this wait? (If yes, wait) ☐ **Sleep on it** (Don't decide same day) ☐ **Write out options** with pros/cons ☐ **Consider my values** (Does this align with who I am?) ☐ **Ask:** What would I advise a friend in this situation? ☐ **Consult trusted advisor** before finalizing ☐ **Check my motivation** (Am I trying to escape pain?)

PROTECTION CHECKLIST

I commit to:

☐ Delaying major decisions at least 6-12 months ☐ Consulting trusted advisors before big choices ☐ Recognizing my judgment is impaired right now ☐ Giving myself permission to change my mind later ☐ Being patient with this process ☐ Protecting my long-term interests

Date to reevaluate major decisions: _____ (Set for 6-12 months from now)

SECTION 6: SELF-CARE & COPING

DAILY LIFE SURVIVAL

On difficult days, I can:

☐ Lower expectations to bare minimum ☐ Call in sick if needed ☐ Decline social obligations ☐ Order takeout instead of cooking ☐ Skip non-essential tasks ☐ Ask for help ☐ Give myself permission to just survive

SUPPORT SYSTEM

People I can call on difficult days:

1. _____ Phone: _____
2. _____ Phone: _____
3. _____ Phone: _____

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Professional support I'm using: ☐ Therapist:

_____ ☐ Support group:

_____ ☐ EAP counseling:

_____ ☐ Other:

Crisis resources if I need immediate help:

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 988
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- Solace: memorialmerits.com/solace

TRACKING PROGRESS

Things that are slightly easier than they were:

Things that are still very hard:

Small victories this week:

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

When navigating daily life feels impossible:

✓ Your best is enough ✓ Functioning at reduced capacity is still functioning ✓ Bad days don't mean failure or regression ✓ Grief and life can coexist ✓ Changed priorities and interests are normal ✓ Needing help is not weakness ✓ There's no correct timeline ✓ One day, one task, one moment at a time ✓ You will survive this ✓ Be patient and gentle with yourself

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NOTES & REFLECTIONS

What's working for me:

What's not working:

Adjustments I need to make:

Questions or concerns:

You're navigating impossible circumstances. The fact that you're trying is enough.

Download more grief support resources at MemorialMerits.com

Read the complete article: [Navigating Grief in Daily Life: Work, Relationships, and Special Occasions](https://MemorialMerits.com/navigating-grief-in-daily-life-work-relationships-and-special-occasions/)

Need support anytime: Solace is available 24/7 at MemorialMerits.com/solace

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