

Dear Friend,


Talking about your feelings and concerns to a trusted and compassionate listener is a very affective way to release and resolve feelings of loss and grief. However, sometimes that special person simply is not available. Who do you talk to at midnight, after you've been tossing and turning for several hours, too restless to sleep? You finally fall asleep out of sheer exhaustion, only to find yourself awake again at 4 a.m. having just enough sleep to prevent yourself from drifting back. During the day you experience times when you are too anxious, upset, or confused to speak out about your feelings.

In such situations, writing your feelings out on paper can bring relief. The enclosed handout "Keeping a Personal Journal" discusses many of the advantages of writing. "Ideas for Journal Writing" highlights typical issues of concern to the bereaved person. If you are one of those persons who find writing effortless and enjoyable—a very natural way of expressing yourself—then I need not say more. You will probably charge right ahead with these ideas, if you have not already incorporated writing into your daily routine.

However, if you find writing to be a painful chore, then learning a few simple techniques can make a big difference. Remember, no one but yourself will be reading your journal. You may choose to destroy your letters immediately after writing them. Keep this in mind, then, you do not have to worry about penmanship, spelling, grammar or whether or not anything even makes the least bit of sense. You may find writing in outline style easier, and quicker, than writing complete sentences. Just jot down isolated thoughts and ideas. When you see them in black and white on the paper before you, you'll be able to move toward clarification.

Once you start writing, force yourself to keep your pen moving, even if your thoughts wander or you find yourself scribbling or doodling. You will be amazed the thoughtful gems you can produce if you allow yourself to move along with your flow of ideas. Please let me or one of the other social workers know if you have any additional suggestions that have been helpful for you. Writing CAN help!

Sincerely,



Patty Robertson
Bereavement Coordinator

"Keeping A Personal Journal"

"One of the most useful means for long-term self-development is the systematic use of an ongoing workbook, diary, or journal. Such a journal, thoughtfully done, can provide a structure to assist us in paying closer attention to our lives and in evoking and developing our understanding of ourselves and others. It acts as a "reflector" of the inner course we are charting day by day, and can give us the stimulation and support which many seek from the outside world."

~ **The purpose of journal writing**- is to afford you the opportunity to reflect upon the meaning and the significance of events in your life as they apply to your inner self.

~ **The focus of journal writing**- is on your unfolding awareness of the new meanings, values and interrelationships you are discovering in yourself and the world.

~ **The values of journal writing**- the act of presenting your ideas on paper forces you to formulate and clarify your thoughts and their accompanying feelings, thus enhancing the power and precision of your thinking. When you make the move from simply thinking something to actually writing it down you are increasing your commitment to your own conscious unfoldment.

Writing forces you to discriminate and to choose which of all of your thoughts are important enough to be documented, thus getting you in better touch with your sense of values. Once you record your ideas on paper you do not have to be preoccupied with thoughts of losing them. The writing makes "room" for new avenues of thinking that you may not have had time to previously consider.

Writing is an effective yet harmless way of "letting off steam" by providing you with a "fully accepting friend" that allows you to discharge your tensions and to vent all of your powerful and disruptive emotions.

~ **The themes and categories for journal writing**- in addition to the narrative written material about your thoughts, feelings, and observations you may also choose to include:

1. Drawings or other visual materials (i.e.) Dreams, fantasies, symbols, or diagrams

that are useful in clarifying or expressing your ideas;

2. Illustrations from magazines or newspapers which capture the thought or image you are writing about;

3. Personally meaningful quotations you may have read or heard;

4. A section entitled "Bright Ideas" may help you to brainstorm about all the possible alternatives to your problems;

5. An inner dialogue (an imaginary conversation) between yourself and any other significant person or important event in your life will help you clarify your relationships, and to develop understanding and insight about your problems.

~ **The outcome of journal writing**- in time you will find that your writing has been effective not only in helping you to define specific problem areas, but also in helping you to work through your problems and in bringing about resolution and personal growth.

Ideas For Journal Writing

You may find it helpful to clarify your thoughts about your loved one by recording your feelings in the form of a letter. Write a letter to the person who died, expressing your thoughts and feelings about the following issues:

- ~ A special memory that I have about you...
- ~ What I miss the most about you and our relationship...
- ~ What I wish I had said or hadn't said...
- ~ What I'd like to ask you...
- ~ What I wish we had done or hadn't done...
- ~ What I've had the hardest time dealing with...
- ~ Ways in which you continue to live on in me...
- ~ Special ways I have for keeping my memories of you alive...

Choose one or several ideas that have significance for you or start at the top of the list and work your way down. These topics may serve to help you come up with your own ideas specific to your situation and relationship.