

Your Life Is Still Here

You are not moving away from the person you loved. You are moving toward your life.



Someone you love died. There are gentler ways to say that. You lost someone. They passed away. They are no longer with us.

But underneath every expression is the same reality. They were here. They mattered. They are gone.

And you are still here.

That last truth can take a long time to know what to do with.

At First, Being Here May Not Feel Like a Gift

People sometimes speak about life after loss with great enthusiasm. Make every day count. Live for both of you. Treasure every moment. Life is short. Perhaps those ideas become meaningful someday.

But immediately after someone dies, continuing to live may not feel inspiring. It may feel exhausting. There are things to do. People need answers. Morning keeps arriving. The dog still needs walking. The electric bill remains stubbornly indifferent to bereavement. Life continues making ordinary demands while something extraordinary has happened. Sometimes participation begins there.

Not with gratitude.

With getting up.

You Have Already Been Living

Perhaps you have thought of this period as something outside ordinary life.

Since Mom died. After my husband died. These last two years.

As though real life stopped and grief took its place. But look at what has happened during that time. You made decisions. Had conversations. Solved problems. Ate meals. Helped people. Learned things. Got irritated. Laughed. Cried. Rested. Kept appointments. Forgot appointments. Changed. Perhaps very slowly. Perhaps dramatically. You have not been waiting outside life for grief to end.

You have been living all along.

The Person You Loved Is Part of That Life

Recovery does not require placing the person behind you. You do not need to graduate from remembering. Their photograph may remain. Their stories may remain. Their influence may remain. You may still talk to them. Say their name. Make their recipe.

Think:



You would not believe this.

Perhaps fifty years from now - or five - you would still give almost anything for one more conversation. That does not mean you failed to move forward. Love does not become a problem merely because the person is no longer physically here.

What Hurt May Not Always Hurt the Same Way

Some memories may still be difficult. Others may have softened. Perhaps you can now tell a story you once could not finish. Visit a place you once avoided. Hear the song. Look at the photograph. Perhaps some things still undo you. Grief does not need to become emotionally neutral. But pain can change. And when it does, you do not need to pull it back toward you to make sure the relationship remains important.

Pain is not the keeper of love.

Love can remain when suffering becomes quieter.

You Are Allowed to Stop Solving What Cannot Be Solved

There may still be questions.

Why did this happen? What if we had known sooner? What if I had called? What would she have said? Did he know? Could something have been different?

Some questions deserve answers. Some may have them. Others do not.

There may come a time when you realize you have been carrying a question long after it stopped offering anything new. You can put it down. Not because it was unimportant. Because there is no further answer available.

You do not have to solve the past before you are permitted to inhabit the present.

You Can Finish What Remains Unfinished

There may also be things that still need attention. Words. Regrets. Anger. Gratitude. Apologies. Things you wish had been different.

Grief recovery does not ask you to pretend those things no longer matter. It gives them somewhere to go. There is a difference between remembering something and remaining emotionally unfinished with it. You can acknowledge what happened. Say what needs saying. Take responsibility for what belongs to you. Release responsibility for what does not. And carry the relationship differently. Completion does not mean forgetting. It means unfinished grief no longer has to keep asking for your attention in the same way.

Your Attention Is Free to Return to Life

Attention is one of the quiet casualties of grief. It gets pulled backward. Toward the hospital. The final conversation. The phone call. The things you wish you had known. The things you wish you had done. Or toward the absence itself. The chair. The silence. The missing person at the table. There was nothing wrong with your attention going there. Something enormous happened.

But eventually your attention can begin moving again. Toward the person speaking to you now. The work in front of you. Something you are learning. The garden. The dog. The light through the window. A problem worth solving. Something beautiful. Something ridiculous. Something that has absolutely nothing to do with grief. Your attention is allowed to belong to the living world.

You Do Not Have to Become a Different Person

Perhaps grief changed you. Of course it did. Important relationships change us. Important losses do too. But you do not need to emerge from grief as a wiser, stronger, more enlightened version of yourself. You do not need a transformation story. You do not need to write the book. Start the foundation. Climb the mountain. Run the marathon. Give the inspirational speech.

You may simply become more fully available to your own life.

That is enough.

You Are Allowed to Want Things That Have Nothing to Do With the Loss

This may be one of the clearest signs that life is widening. You want something. Not because the person who died would have wanted it for you. Not in their honor. Not because the loss taught you to seize the day.

You just want it. A different house. A garden. A trip. A class. More quiet. More people. A new project. A ridiculous chair. A better tomato. A business. A nap.

You are allowed desires that do not have to pass through grief before becoming legitimate.



Your future does not have to remain a memorial.

Other People Are Here Too

This can be easy to miss when someone important is gone. There are people who are still here. People you already love. People who love you. People you barely know yet. People you have not met. Some relationships may deepen. Others may end. New ones may appear. None replaces the person who died.

They do not need to. Human relationships are not vacancies waiting to be filled. The people who are here get to matter because they are themselves. And you get to be present with them without dividing your loyalty.

You Are Here Too

Perhaps this deserves more attention than we usually give it. You are not only the person who survived the loss. You are a living person inside your own life. You have needs. Preferences. Limits. Curiosity. Knowledge. Capacity. Desire. Humor. Things you care about. Things you are tired of. Things you still want to understand. Perhaps things you still want to build.

Your life does not matter only because other people need you. It does not matter only because the person who died would want you to live it.

Your life has value because it is your life.

You Don't Have to Make Up for the Life They Didn't Get

Sometimes survival creates a strange responsibility. They didn't get these years. So you should use yours perfectly. Travel more. Love more. Waste less time. Appreciate everything. Never complain. That is an impossible assignment. You are still human. You will waste afternoons. Get annoyed over trivial things. Make questionable purchases. Spend too much time looking for something that was directly in front of you. Have days when you accomplish almost nothing.

That is not disrespectful to the dead. It is ordinary life. You do not have to live magnificently enough for two people. You only have to live your own.

Participation Is Not the Same as Control

Turning toward life does not mean everything becomes good. There will be other losses. Other disappointments. Bodies age. Relationships change. Plans fail. People make decisions we cannot control. Life remains uncertain. Participation does not mean controlling what happens. It means remaining available to reality as it unfolds. Responding. Choosing. Caring. Learning. Resting. Beginning again. Sometimes grieving again.

You do not need a guarantee that life will not hurt you before you agree to participate in it.

You Can Carry Love Forward Without Living Backward

The person who died belongs to your life. Not only to your grief. They belong to stories. Memory. Influence. History. Perhaps faith. Perhaps family. Perhaps the way you make soup. Perhaps the way you think.

Perhaps a phrase you hear yourself saying and suddenly realize:

Oh my goodness. I sound exactly like my mother.

They can remain part of the life you are living without requiring you to keep returning to the moment when their life ended. You can carry love forward.

Your Life Does Not Need to Compete With the Loss

You do not need to become happier than you were before. More successful. More adventurous. More grateful. You do not need an extraordinary second act. You do not need to prove that grief did not defeat you. Your life is not in competition with death. It is simply still happening. Perhaps that life becomes very large. Perhaps it becomes quiet. Perhaps both at different times. The question is not whether you make it impressive.

The question is whether you are increasingly able to be here for it.

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That is where we have been heading. Not toward forgetting. Not toward letting go of love. Not toward pretending death was somehow good for you. Not toward becoming grateful for what happened. Not toward replacing the person. Not toward finally reaching the stage where nothing hurts. Toward participation. Toward becoming increasingly available to what is happening now.

The loss can remain significant. The love can remain. The memories can remain. The person can remain part of who you are. And your attention can still turn toward life. There are people here. There are ordinary days here. There are things you care about. Things you do not know yet. Things that may surprise you. Things that will



disappoint you. Things that will make you laugh. There may even be something you have not yet imagined wanting.

You do not have to rush toward any of it. But you are allowed to be available when it arrives.

They were here. They mattered. They are gone. You are still here.

And perhaps grief recovery is not about making any one of those truths disappear. Perhaps it is learning to live faithfully with all four. Not leaving the person behind. Not standing forever beside the place where you lost them. Carrying what belongs with you. Releasing what no longer needs to be carried. And turning, again and again, toward the life that is actually here.

You are not moving away from the person you loved. You are moving toward your life.

And love is allowed to come with you.

If You Found Yourself Wanting to Tell Me About Them

Perhaps somewhere in this series you thought:

Yes. That's exactly what happened.

Or perhaps you disagreed. Remembered something. Wanted to tell a story. Wanted someone to know what they were like before they became "the person who died." Perhaps you realized there are still things you wish you could say. Grief does not always need to be fixed. But sometimes there are parts of a relationship that remain emotionally unfinished long after the death.