

## JOURNEY THROUGH GRIEF “JOURNALING THROUGH YOUR GRIEF”

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“The grief process is like sailing across a stormy sea. When we first experience a great loss, we are launched into a tempest of emotions.

We feel surrounded by darkness and heavy waves of anguish. Comforting words are drowned out by howling winds of sorrow. We feel lonely and out of control as we are swept toward a new destination in life”.

### Scripture verse for a grieving heart

Jesus promises comfort and blessings for those who are going through the process of grief and mourning.

Other uplifting Scripture verses:

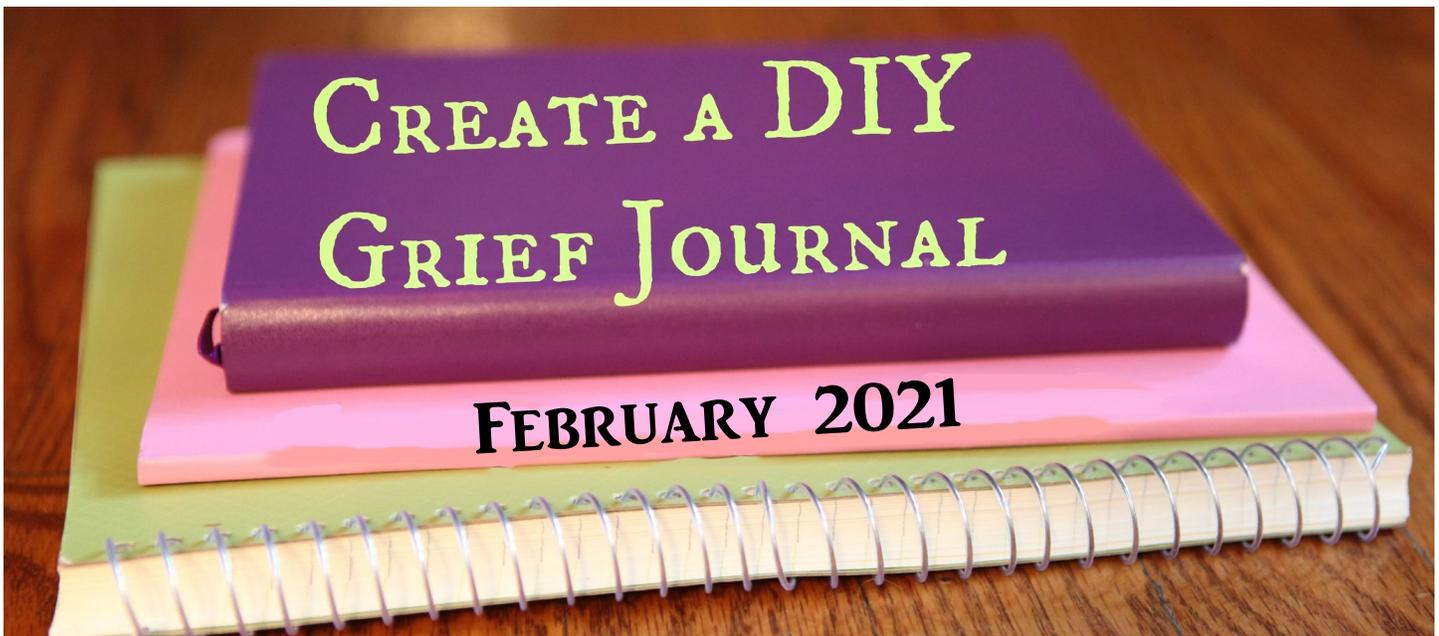
- John 14:27;
- Psalm 46: 1;
- Psalm 23



Cry whenever you need to.  
Scream. Shout. Lay on the floor. Sob in the shower. Be still. Run. Walk. Create. Live your truth. Share without fear. Listen. Release your pain. Breathe. Be courageous. Throw away the map. Wander. Be real. Be compassionate. Read. Seek friendship. Be vulnerable. Don't fear being broken.

-Zoe Clark-Coates



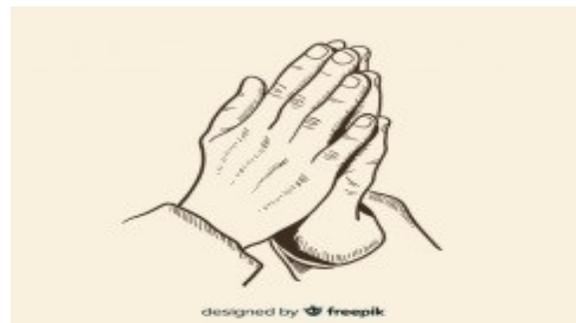


### A Prayer

Dear Father, I come before you today with a heavy heart. Sadness overwhelms me. I feel surrounded by a dense fog that I fear will never lift. Like David, "my tears have been my food day and night" (Psalm 42:3). For however long this season of sorrow lasts, I pray that you would show me more of your love and grace. Help me my God not to run from whatever you want to do in my heart.

Help me to trust that you are at work and to rest in your faithfulness. I want to say along with David; "I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul" (Psalm 31:7)). Thank you my Lord for hearing and

answering my prayer. Amen.



### Question: 'How long does grief last?'

- The reality is that grief does not have a timeline; it does not have a calendar; it does not a straight line experience.
- It may more closely resemble a roller coaster, with peaks and valleys and frequent, abrupt changes of speed and intensity.

"The duration of grief is a very individual thing. Part of the intensity and duration of grief depends on the relationship and attachment the bereaved person had with the person lost. It may also depend partially on the person's coping style with dealing with other stressors. For example, a person who asks for support from friends and family members and has ways of

expressing emotions may be able to work through his/her grieving process more easily than one who keeps everything to him/herself. Commonly, grief of a loved person is more pronounced at anniversary times, such as holidays or birthdays. Grief may come in "waves" for months or even years, and still be considered "normal" grieving".



### A Thought

"Journaling can actually improve your physical and emotional health. By putting your thoughts and feelings into words, they come into sharper focus, and you can outwardly express what you inwardly feel. Among other things, this outward expression, this releasing of thoughts and emotions, reduces stress, which improves sleep".

### What is Journaling?

- Journaling is simply writing down your thoughts and feelings to understand them more clearly.
- It involves writing down the thoughts that whizz around your head.
- Journaling can help you organise thoughts, clear your mind, facilitate problem solving and gain perspective.



### Journaling through your grief

Due to the height of COVID-19 pandemic, our usual ways of mourning are not available to us right now. There are now even tighter restrictions imposed upon us. There are no hugs from family and friends who share your grief, no telling of stories that bring tears as well as smiles. This new reality seems to only magnify the pain you're currently feeling.

Grieving in isolation can have a serious impact on your physical and emotional wellbeing. One of the major concerns is that you don't know how long the lockdown will last which means that, you could be on your own for a long time with only contact through social media. It is very important therefore that during this difficult time you remain focus, think positive, keep yourself busy and your mind active. Self-care in this challenging time is also crucial.#

Journaling through your grief is a way to keep yourself busy and your mind active. It can prove to be your best friend during the lonely process of grief. Journaling is also a healthy way to release emotions you may be keeping inside, and to help you move forward in your healing journey.



## Personal testament about journaling

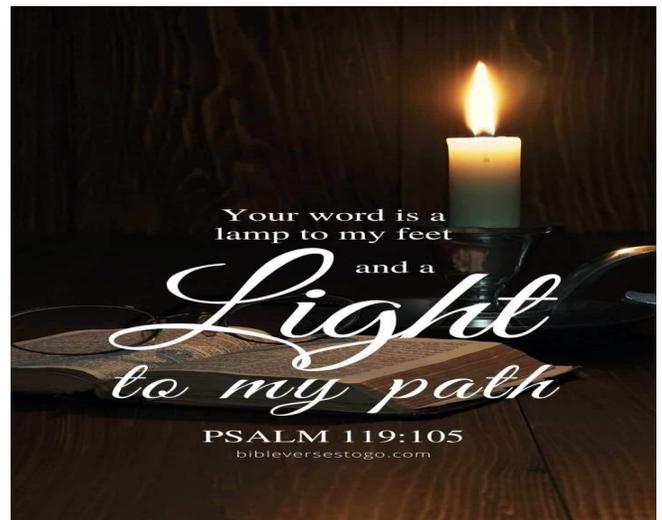
### Testimony 1

#### **Journaling helped me find redemption after loss.**

“For several years after my bereavement, the story I told about myself focused on the events that had burnt my life down. It was what defined me at that moment and I didn’t want it taken away from me.

Writing about my pain allowed me to eventually gain a new perspective. Reading over my words, I became a detached witness of my story and I was able to see how my story is related to the universal narrative pattern of what Joseph Campbell calls “the hero’s journey.”

Today I am able to tell my story as a narrative of redemption. I stumbled into the dark woods of grief and I came out of it transformed, stronger, and more aware of the preciousness of life. It’s a story I share with those who accept grief as an opportunity for deep transformation”.



### Testimony 2

“Grief journaling is one way of allowing ourselves the space for genuine healing to take place, whether or not we’re ready and willing to express ourselves to others”.

## Benefits of journaling

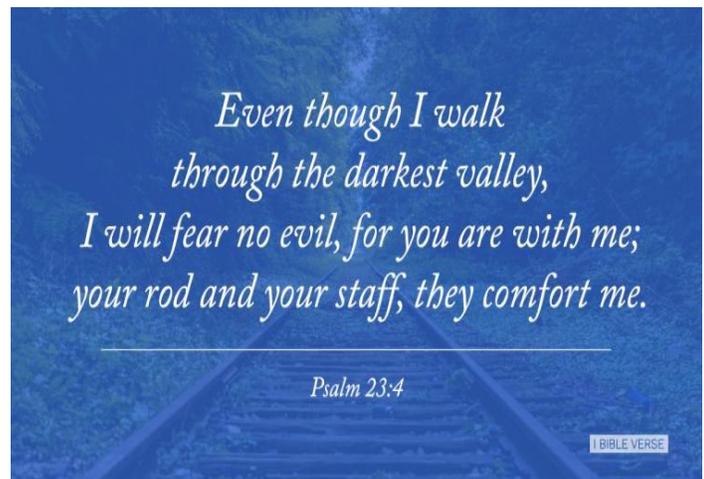
- Journaling is a good way to work through your thoughts and feelings

- Grief journaling offers a simple outlet that requires only a pen and paper (diary or notebook).
- Journaling does not require us to talk out loud if we are not ready.
- It Keeps Memory Sharp. Journaling helps keep your brain in tip-top shape.
- Writing in your journal (notebook) enables you to keep your mind active in a positive way.
- Instead of keeping your prayers in your head, you can put it on paper. The pain of grief can sometimes make us forget the goodness of God; by putting your prayers in your journal, you can go back to see the written prayers and be encouraged that God has always been near you and still is.
- Writing is a creative form of worship; David was considered a man after God's own heart. He was known for writing the Psalms—full of his struggles and worries, but always coming back to praise God and declaring his love and trust of God.

"You can't always fix your problems, and some pain you simply need to hand over for healing. The best part about writing to God is ultimately recognising that you're not in control.

What a relief to get out everything that's troubling you and then say at the end, "Here God, I can't do this on my own." When you surrender and trust, you let go of stressful and anxious thoughts.

Sometimes this is easier said than done. But physically writing the words down, even if you're struggling to really feel them, is really powerful. "Dear God, I don't understand Your will, please help me to understand".



Remember that coronavirus may keep you under lockdown and away from your family and friends, but it cannot keep you away from having contact with your Father in heaven; you have direct access wherever you are.

### How to write a journal?

- **Make it easy.** Keep a pen and a diary or a notebook handy at all times, then when you want to write down your thoughts, you can.
- **Write whatever feels right.** Your journal doesn't need to follow any certain structure. It's your own private place to discuss whatever you want. Let the words flow freely. Don't worry about spelling mistakes
- **Use your journal as you see fit.** You don't have to share your journal with anyone. If you do want to share some of your thoughts with trusted friends and loved ones, you could show them parts of your journal. It is entirely up to you.

**Try to write every day.** Set aside a few minutes every day to write. This will help you to write in your journal regularly.



**Journaling Tips:** (Natalie Goldberg–“Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within”)

- Keep your hands moving; do not pause to re-read the line you have just written...that is stalling and trying to get control of what you are saying.
- Do not cross out. That is editing as you write. Even if you write something you did not mean to write, leave it– let it be.
- Do not worry about spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- Do not think or be logical. Let your right brain take over.
- Dive into the tough stuff. Do not avoid the scary unsettling parts of grief...this is sometimes where the best processing and healing takes place.

Be compassionate and gentle with yourself. Remember, this is a judgement free zone.

**Principles of grief journaling**

- **Be Spontaneous** – Follow your gut. Don't second – guess yourself. Write quickly and allow the unexpected to happen.
- **Be Honest** – write about who you really are. Be open about what you really feel, want, and believe.

This may be a little frightening at first, but keep writing. You will become more comfortable with your work over time.

- **See the Big Picture** –include more than just facts in your journal. Write about how you see things and how you understand what you are experiencing in your grief. Don't worry if your outlook changes from day to day, or moment to moment.
- **Begin Somewhere** – just start writing. Write about yourself at this moment, or about the day you are beginning your journal. Write about what is on your mind, and keep going from there.

Remember that the most important thing is that you are writing only for yourself (your eyes only). There is no wrong or right way to write your thoughts and feelings, and you don't have to worry about spelling words incorrectly. If you're feeling angry, you can feel free to express anger without fear of being judged by anyone. The point is to get your feelings out rather than keep them buried inside.

**If you're feeling overwhelmed with grief; finding it difficult to cope in isolation and loneliness, or if you're struggling to cope on your own and you don't feel able to contact family or friends, please don't sit in silence; contact your GP or seek support from other professionals (list of contacts below).**



### Grief Journal Prompts

There are no hard or fast rules to write your journal but these prompts can help to get started:

- How do you feel today, and how would you describe this feeling to someone else?
- Put your saddest feelings into words. Describe the pain you feel in emotional and physical terms.
- A comforting memory of my loved one is...
- Write about your strengths and how they will help you adjust.
- Set some goals for yourself in your grief and record your progress.
- The hardest time of day is...
- Some of my grief triggers are...
- Journaling brings tears. Let them fall but don't let your tears stop you from writing.

Remember not to hold back your feelings. Write what you're thinking, how does it makes you feel and behave. Be reflective if you wish. Your journal is your

own personal space to express your feelings about anything and everything.

### Grief Journal Exercise 1

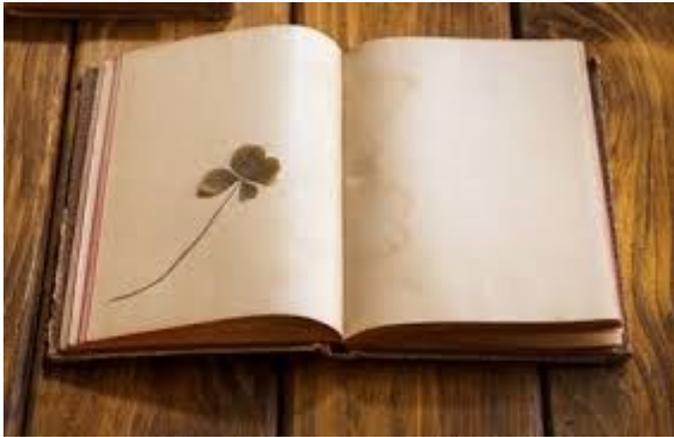
You can try this exercise or you could think of another one.

Think back on the most vivid memories you have of the person you lost. To spark your memory, you can flip through old photo albums or journal. Choose one of these stories to focus on, close your eyes and try to remember it in detail. Re-live the memory in your mind, and then use these questions to write about the experience:

- Where were you?
- What were you doing?
- What were you wearing?
- Who else was there?
- What smells, sounds and sights do you remember about the scene?
- What were your emotions at the time? What emotions do you feel now, looking back on this memory?
- Why is this particular story significant to the relationship you had with your loved one?

Find a visual representation of this story. If you had a photo taken that day, paste it into your journal. If not, look through old magazines to find an image that represents your feelings about your memory.

You can also make a collage on a page in your journal of many images and words that express your emotions toward this story. Take your time and choose images that mean something to you.



### Remember that in addition to journaling, self-care is very important

- During this time of isolation, it is crucial that you stay connected with your friends and family through social media.
- **Eat Healthy**
- Promoting a nutritious, healthy diet will work wonders for your physical and emotional well-being.

### Stay active

Sometimes when we're grieving, we get aches and pains in our body, so try to do some gentle exercise. It doesn't have to be too intense or fancy. If you have a garden, walk up and down a few times; if you haven't, find a space indoors to do some gentle stretching and march on the spot. You could even sit in your arm chair and do some legs and arms movement.

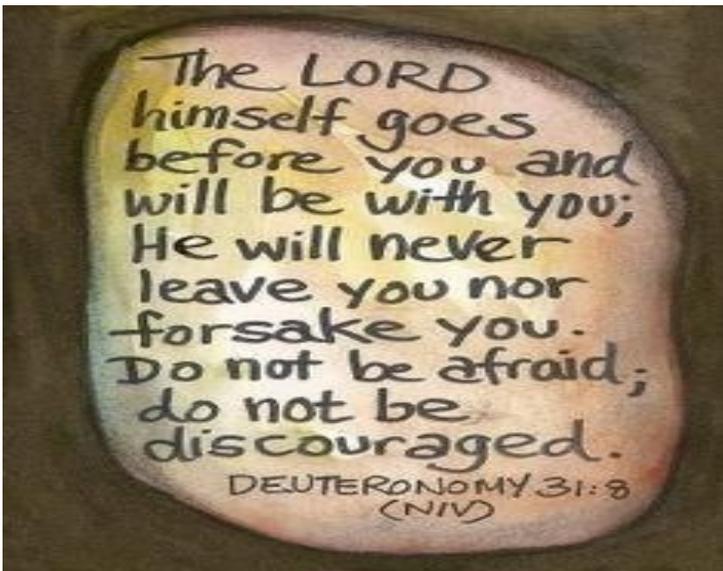


### Get enough rest

- Most adults need between seven and eight hours of sleep every night for proper functioning during the day.
- Remember to give yourself permission to experience the emotions you need to experience as you feel them as this is integral to the grieving process.
- If you feel the need to cry and let go, do it; bottling up those feelings won't make them go away; in fact, that will make them get worse.



Remember also that although in the physical, it may seem as though you are on your own, the Bible reminds us that, God will never leave nor forsake us. Wherever you are and whatever you're going through, He is right there beside you. COVID 19 may keep you locked in, but you're certainly not locked out from the presence of God.



Be blessed; Stay safe Blessings

*The Bereavement Café*



- Samaritans Helpline: [08457 909090](tel:08457909090)  
24 hours a day
- Cruse Bereavement Care: 0808 808 1677
- Bereavement Trust Helpline: 0800 435 455, from 6–10pm
- Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC)
- On the website– Homepage (ACC), Click on 'Find a Counsellor', then scroll down the page and enter your postcode for a list of counsellors in your

area. You could Telephone 024 7644 9694 and someone will guide you through the process.

- [www.wntcg.org/bereavement](http://www.wntcg.org/bereavement)
- [www.wntcg.org/care](http://www.wntcg.org/care)

### Young People –Bereavement services/Emotional support

#### Grief Encounter

- Provides support to children and families who have been bereaved via phone, online chat and email.
- You can also take part in group activities with likeminded families at their Fundays, Grief Groups and Remembrance Days.
- Phone open Monday–Friday 9am–9pm: 0808 802 0111
- [Online chat](#)  
Email: [griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk)

#### Winston's Wish

- Provides support to bereaved children, families and any adults supporting a young person through bereavement.
- Open Monday–Friday 9am–5pm.
- Phone: 08088 020 021
- Email: [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

Their [online chat](#) service provides support directly to young people. Open Fridays 10am–1pm.

#### Cruse Bereavement Care

- Provides support to anyone affected by bereavement.
- Helpline open Monday–Friday 9.30–5pm, with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings when they're open until 8pm. Phone 0808 808 1677