

# HOW TO COPE WITH THE DEATH OF A PARTNER

*Strategies for Surviving  
the Difficult Times Ahead  
and Maintaining Your  
Emotional Health*

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## Contents

Preface	1
<i>One.</i> Tackling Necessary Tasks Immediately after a Death	3
<i>Two.</i> Deciding What to Do with Remains	5
<i>Three.</i> Accepting Help from Others	7
<i>Four.</i> Managing Others' Responses to Your Grief	9
<i>Five.</i> Considering a Bereavement Group	11
<i>Six.</i> Meeting Spiritual Needs	13
<i>Seven.</i> Coping with Being Alone	15
<i>Eight.</i> Dealing with Clothes	17
<i>Nine.</i> Deciding What to Do with Jewelry	19
<i>Ten.</i> Dealing with Photos, Digital Recordings, Books, and Papers	21
<i>Eleven.</i> Coping with Special Anniversaries	23
<i>Twelve.</i> Surviving Valentine's Day	25
<i>Thirteen.</i> Welcoming Good and Bad Memories	27
<i>Fourteen.</i> Confronting Dating and Sex	29
Conclusion	31
For More Information	32

## Preface

THIS BOOKLET EVOLVED WHILE I WAS WRITING *Tincture of Time: Living Through Grief to Hope*, a memoir about my husband's death. One part of me was deeply involved in chronicling my experiences and feelings about this momentous transition, while another part of me—the therapist—wanted to give advice and suggestions to people facing similar challenges. But I couldn't be objective enough to write a how-to book while subjectively recounting my experiences. Consequently, I focused on writing this booklet following the completion of my memoir.

Here I have covered essential steps and stages that will help people move through the difficult time of mourning the death of a partner. Throughout, I have highlighted some of the dangers that we all must face when we are emotionally vulnerable. Personal safeguards found at the end of each chapter, preceded by an orange glow indicating caution, are designed to help grieving individuals maintain emotional health at a time when stress and anxiety can negatively impact decision making.

In general, it is best to approach each day in a manner I used to recommend while teaching knitting to bedridden patients who were seriously ill: I encouraged them to read only one line of instruction at a time, since reading all the steps necessary for task completion would surely have overwhelmed them. So rather than thinking about the many tasks there are to do in the emotionally vulnerable time of mourning, stay in the present moment and let each completed task lead organically to the start of the next one, checking them off as you progress. Moving step by step, one day after the next, is the most gentle and efficient way to accomplish all that needs to be done.

## *One*

# Tackling Necessary Tasks Immediately after a Death

- Notify relatives and friends of the death.
- Call the lawyer or executor who has authority regarding the will and ask what needs to be done.
- Notify the cemetery or crematorium of the death and make arrangements for burial or cremation. Tell relatives and friends of your wishes concerning the details of any ceremony.
- Write an obituary for appropriate publications.
- Arrange for a suitable memorial service. Select special individuals who were close to the deceased to give eulogies.
- Request at least twenty copies of the death certificate since a copy is required for every change of a document.
- Notify any institutions from which your partner was receiving benefits, such as Social Security or other retirement assistance, so the benefits can be stopped or transferred to you.
- Notify credit card companies so the accounts can be closed.
- Decide what you want to wear to any commemorative service. You do not have to dress in black. Sometimes wearing an article of clothing or something special your partner gave to you will make you feel less bereft for the moment.



### **TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**

Delegate responsibilities so you don't have to do everything. You will want to do all the tasks because that makes you feel closer to the deceased, but it will also sap your energy at a time when you really need it.