Amy Jaffe Barzach is an award-winning social entrepreneur, powerful and empowering coach, and passionate advocate for inclusion. Inspired by her son Jonathan who died before his 1st birthday, and a little girl in a wheelchair she’d seen sadly watching everyone else play on a playground that wasn’t accessible, Amy led a team of 1,200 parents and professionals in the development of Jonathan’s Dream, a unique and innovative inclusive playground. The public’s thirst for such places was so great, that Amy left her career in corporate America to found Boundless Playground, the 1st national nonprofit organization dedicated to this cause. Today, thanks to Amy’s vision and leadership, and the thousands of volunteers and supporters who shared her passion, more than 135 inclusive playgrounds have been developed in 25 states. Amy continues to inspire and energize people through her coaching, books and articles; and her leadership role with a national coalition of organizations dedicated to inclusion.
A Personal Message from Amy

Most people want to run from grief or stay busy so they don’t notice it. For a long time, I did both. I finally decided that “I would rather feel something than nothing at all” as it says in the award winning song “I Need You Now” that was written by my friend Josh Kear. I’d felt good when people said how “well” I was doing. For years, that was enough until the day it wasn’t. On that day, I was brought to my knees again, just like the day my son Jonathan died. I didn’t think I had the strength or the courage I needed to go on. I was afraid that if I faced my grief, it might swallow me up and I’d never find my way back. More than anything else, I was afraid I’d lose my connection to Jonathan. Which, when you think about it are all reasons why I’d done what I’d done for so many years. When you’re in the throes of grief, you do the best you can, and that works for awhile. When it stops working, it’s an invitation to look for other answers.

I have to be honest and tell you that for me, there will always be a ‘before’ during Jonathan’s life and an ‘after’ after his death. I can also tell you that what I learned through the grieving and healing process has made me a better person, a more conscious person, a more successful person, and a person who really knows what matters. Everywhere I go to do keynotes or teach workshops, I meet people who basically say the same thing “Talking to you made me realize what’s important in my own life; I feel inspired to explore this further and to figure out how to incorporate more of what really matters to into my life.” Even though my heart was broken by Jonathan’s death, I am more whole – and more awake - than I ever was. This is an example of the good that can be found in grief – when you are ready to find it.

You may be reading this Healing Grief Guide with Life Design worksheets when the time is right for you to find the good in your grief. And if it is, I applaud you for following the instincts that led you here. Be gentle with yourself during this process. Know that there are resources that can help you, grief counselors and educators, therapists, social workers and clergy, books and groups, and coaches like me. I used many of these resources at different times during my healing. Asking for help doesn’t make you look weak; it is sign of true strength.

And if you are not ready yet, that is OK too. Everything I said in the paragraph above is especially true for you. Before I was ready, I had a place in my nightstand for resources like this. Things I might need when and for many years, if I was ever ready. I tried not forcing myself to do anything I wasn’t ready to do. Ok, I’ll admit that at first, I tried to be the perfect ‘bereaved mother’- God knows what that means. I tried to make it all better for the people I cared about who were also feeling lost. It may have made other people feel better but honestly it was sucking the life blood out of me. I now know that there is no need to be perfect or to do this grieving thing right. In fact there is no right way except being open-minded and doing whatever works for you.
It is ironic that the very things I thought I didn’t have the strength or courage to deal with were the very things that were sapping my energy or making me feel more afraid, more vulnerable, more lost… Many years ago, over a glass of wine at a pub near Princeton University, I was told that the Latin derivation of the word "pretend" means to hold true, act as if it is true, and as a result, make it true. With this concept you can find people to be role models for you – people you know or can meet in person or people you can read about. With this definition, I didn’t feel bad when I pretended to be courageous when I felt afraid; when I pretended to be logical in order to understand the complicated hospital procedures when I felt overwhelmed… I found this concept to be very helpful for me and I encourage you to try it.

In addition to being gateways to healing, the surprising truth is that powerful emotions like grief and despair (though admittedly uninvited) can be effective ways to access our creativity, our energy and our deepest longings. More examples of the good that can be found in grief.

My second child, Jonathan was born in April 1994 with sparkling blue “old soul” eyes and a beautiful smile. I thought I had it all - a wonderful husband, two happy and healthy boys (my three year old son, Daniel and now Jonathan), great relationships with family and friends, two sweet dogs, a successful career and an almost six month maternity leave. Two weeks before Jonathan was born, the Hartford Courant even featured my “perfect life” in a half page article entitled “Women Who Have It All and Have It Good”. In the pictures, I was 8½ months pregnant in my beautiful downtown office, relaxing with my husband in front of a roaring fire, wearing a clown nose as I played with Daniel, and on an exercise bike. After everything that happened later that year, the irony doesn’t escape me.

That spring and summer, my family enjoyed life. Then one day Jonathan couldn’t hold his head up. It took us months to figure out what was wrong, and later that fall, he was diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy. The doctors thought he had Type II, the less terrible kind. We made a promise to Jonathan that we would help him have a good life, despite the physical trauma this disease would inflict on his body. The doctors were wrong and just before Christmas, they changed his diagnosis to Type I and told us he would die before his 2nd birthday. Life as we knew it was over. When Jonathan died less than two weeks later, the days were difficult, the nights were worse, and the mornings only brought more days.

A hospice counselor suggested we think of something we could do in his honor. She encouraged us to come up with the essence of an idea while he was still with us so that we could tell him about it. We remembered being at the park that summer and seeing a little girl in a wheelchair sadly watching everyone else play on a playground she couldn’t get to or on. We imagined that in Jonathan’s dreams, he would have wanted playgrounds to be places where everyone could play, regardless of ability or disability. We decided to develop an inclusive playground where children with and without disabilities could play. She cautioned us to think about the essence of the idea – a

place where children of all abilities could celebrate life – and give ourselves lots of ways to make the essence of the idea happen.

After Jonathan’s death in January 1995, we wanted to move forward with this memorial project but the brutally honest truth is that for months I felt lost. People who see me doing keynote speeches at conferences now wonder how I did it. They say they don’t know how they would have gotten through it. “Accidental Courage, Boundless Dreams” is the title of the 1st book I wrote. At the time, I loved the title because I felt like my courage was accidental, mostly because I didn’t know where it had come from. I didn’t think of myself as particularly strong or brave. In hindsight though, I would like the title to “Choosing Courage”, because I realize that within each of us lie the seeds of what we need in life – strength, courage, discipline, hope... everything. Much like mighty oak trees growing from little acorns, I now know that we each have the ability to choose courage, or anything else we need, when we need it. To help me remember this, I carry a small silver acorn charm in my pocket.

This Healing Grief Guide is a combination of what I do with my private coaching clients, what I teach in public workshops; and worksheets and instructions, some original, some modified from the Life Design workbook. I am honored and privileged to be working in partnership with James Vaughan (its co-author) and Kelly Castor on new editions of Life Design.

The way to heal your grief is to honor the person you lost, find an eternal connection, and use the feelings, as raw as they may be, as a looking glass into your own heart. Give yourself permission to feel your feelings. Make a daily/weekly/monthly/quarterly/annual date with yourself and the feelings you have for your loved one. Choose the frequency that feels right to you. Have a definite end time so you know you have a way back to life as you currently know it. Set a timer to let you know when each date with grief is over and come up with a small but pleasant ritual to signify the ending of your session – for some people this is an uplifting song, for others like me, it is a walk. It can be anything that works for you.

Grief is both devastating and transformative. It is natural to want to ignore it but when we do, the result is often an inability to feel anything at all. Powerful learning can come from grief if/when we let it. In moments of great loss, we have access to tremendous clarity about what really matters. I invite you to move through this guide at your own pace and with compassion for yourself. Feel free to contact me via email at info@amybarzach.com if you have any questions. You are on a path you might never have chosen but since you’re on it, I encourage you to make the most of it by finding the good in your grief.

Best regards,
This Healing Your Grief Guide is divided into three parts:

- Part I: Remembering, Reviewing & Reflecting
- Part II: Healing, Connection & Completion
- Part III: Putting the Good in Grief to Work

By working through this guide in a serious, organized way, you can embrace, appreciate, and surprisingly benefit from your grief, which can force you to realize what really matters to you. But more important, you will be learning a process for dealing with all kinds of losses (divorce, loss of job, death of a pet, retirement…) that you can apply to making your life more successful, more satisfying and more meaningful.

Part I: Remembering, Reviewing & Reflecting
Guides you through a review of your loved one’s life. The exercises in this section can help you gain perspective about your loved one’s life. This section can be done on your own and also used at gatherings of your loved one’s family and friends.

Part II: Healing, Connections & Completion
Leads you through seemingly simple exercises that support you in keeping the love, memories and eternal connection; creating meaning, and honoring your loved one’s life; while helping you start letting go of the pain.

Part III: Putting the Good in Grief to Work
Reviewing the life of your loved one and dealing with the emotions of grief can lead to extraordinary insights into your own life. This section gives you tools to start living your own life “by choice instead of my chance”.

My personal experience healing from grief would not be complete without having done the Grief Recovery Handbook by John W. James and Russell Friedman’s “action program for moving beyond death, divorce, and other losses”. I can’t emphasize enough how important it is for you to buy this book to complement what you will be doing in the Finding the Good in Grief – Healing Guide.

USING THIS GUIDE WITH A PARTNER

My good friend, James Vaughan Ph.D. described how to do this kind of work with a partner in the introduction to *Life Design*. No matter how well you know each other at this point, you each had your own individual relationship with the person who died. There are no right or wrong answers, just what you each see from your own experience. You can also expect to learn some new things about your partner and yourself: from the past, from your lives right now, and in the hopes you have for the future.

This material will give you opportunities to explore your innermost feelings. It, and each of you, deserves the utmost in respect when you decide to share this kind of exploration with another person. Here are some specific suggestions when you want to work with a partner:

1. It is crucial for each of you to work independently with your own personal worksheets. Once you’ve committed your thoughts to writing, sharing them with your partner will often bring even more clarity and insight. Don’t underestimate the value of writing your own thoughts down first. It may seem easier to simply share your thoughts verbally, but you will each lose some important personal insights if you do that before recording your independent thoughts.

2. Find a pace of working through the material that’s comfortable for both of you. This kind of work can be very enlivening, but it can also be emotionally draining. Try to respect your differences in needs, interests, and personal styles. You may feel finished with a particular activity just as your partner is digging into it. You’ll both need to exercise your best skills as non-judgmental listeners to gain the most from the experience. Generally speaking, sharing smaller chunks frequently will work better than larger chunks with more time in between. Pay attention to your body and your heart and take breaks when you need to. Later you can use the completed worksheets to do additional research, have conversations with family and friends or for journaling.

3. Use care in choosing where you work on this and the amount of time you allow for it. The important thing is to find times and places where you can be present for each other and relatively free from interruptions.

4. Be gentle with your partner and yourself.

BEFORE YOU START

During a Dream University (www.dreamuniversity.com) coaches training program in San Francisco a few years ago, I learned about the power of intentions from Marcia Wieder. Either what you intend to accomplish or how you intend to be (something like open-minded, compassionate to yourself, positive or strong). Recently at the start of a weekend workshop in New England, I wrote out the following intentions, which includes both kinds, and signed my name to them. On the following page, you’ll have a chance to set your intentions for the work you are doing with this Healing Grief Guide. What I did looked like this:

My Intentions . . .

. . . during this training program are to learn a new coaching skill, to be the 1st person to raise my hand for at least one opportunity and to be open-minded.

Encarta Dictionary defines in-ten-tion, a noun this way:

1. **aim or objective** – something that somebody plans to do  
   Example: State your intentions.

2. **quality of purposefulness / the quality or state of having a purpose in mind**  
   Example: I approached the training with the intention of being open-minded.

When the trainer asked for volunteers, because of making and committing to these intentions, my hand shot up. I thought I’d be part of a short exercise from my seat. To my surprise I was asked to sit on a stool in the front of the room full of 100 people.

I could have backed out after I learned what I’d be doing but since my intention included being open-minded, I decided to give it a try. For 30 minutes, I was the recipient of deep and public coaching using a technique called voice dialogue. For someone who used to be shy, this was a really big stretch. I remembered having scoliosis (curvature of the spine) and having to wear a big, heavy metal back and neck brace 23 hours a day for almost a year. During the exercise, that part of me had a chance to be heard. This part of me spoke about how people saw my disability and didn’t seem to see me; how I had longed to be included, how I had longed to be included, how at that time, I never had a chance to play. This part of me got to stand in the spotlight with the work I’d been in Jonathan's honor: founding and leading a nonprofit organization that was helping communities develop inclusive playgrounds; places where children of all abilities could celebrate life and feel worthy. When I was making it possible for children with disabilities to be in the middle of the fun, this part of me was thrilled.
Since I was no longer working for Boundless Playgrounds, this part of me was afraid it would never have a chance to be and do those kinds of things again. In the fall of 2008, I had started a new chapter in my life as a speaker, coach and advocate for inclusion. I was experiencing success but all of my clients found me. This part of me was afraid that if I became too successful, I would forget what really mattered, which is what was making it hard for me to actively market myself. It is interesting to note that knowing what really matters is the biggest lesson I learned from Jonathan. Now that I am conscious about this concern, I can commit to give this part of me what it (really I) need. It sounds kind of silly but the parts of ourselves that we refuse to listen to can derail us. If you ever wanted to do something and somehow couldn’t, it is likely that a part of you needing to be heard was the cause. Identifying what is unconsciously holding you back is the 1st part of voice dialogue, the 2nd part, which could be a book unto itself, is how to do something about it. You’ll find lots of information about voice dialogue on the internet. One of my favorite resources is Tim Kelley’s book, True Purpo

They say that people teach what they most need to learn. I was doing that. For the last decade I’ve been a student of what I now call 21st Century Success©, a combination of professional success, successful relationships with others and with yourself, and success through genuine service. I’ve been coaching successful women, founders of nonprofit organizations, and recent retirees of both sexes to put themselves into the equation of their own lives. That by paying attention to their own needs and preferences, and addressing these three aspects of success, they can have more energy, enjoy better relationships, feel more satisfaction and live a more meaningful life.

I shared this personal story with you here to show you how stating and honoring intentions led to a breakthrough in my life. I encourage you - right now – to think about and write your intentions below. Indicate your commitment to yours by signing your name and dating it.

My Intentions…

___________________________________________

Sign your name here and date it

HEALING YOUR GRIEF GUIDE

PLEASE STOP AND TAKE A MOMENT TO SEE IF YOU HAVE ANY NEW INSIGHTS YOU WANT TO CAPTURE ON THIS PAGE FOR NOTES

PART I: REMEMBERING, REVIEWING & REFLECTING

This section provides you with a structure to help you (and other people if you want) remember and share memories. The purpose of the Life Review on the following page is to give you a better understanding of your loved one’s life. Doing this Life Review will support you in organizing what you know, remembering other things, and possibly to seeing their life in new ways. You can also share this guide with other people who cared about your loved one and give them an opportunity to participate in this process. The focus of this section is not on analyzing or judging what was good or bad, but on understanding its impact on your loved one’s life.

You may have more than one person you are grieving for. It is important to only use this Healing Grief Guide for one loved one at a time. Some people pick the most painful loss in their life. Others pick a loss that is less emotionally charged the first time. Do what feels right to you.

Step 1:
Using the tables below, fill in how old your loved one was in each of the time periods. The dates in the boxes overlap to make the process easier. Exact dates are not important since they are only used to jog your memory. Feel free to expand or edit the table to include periods of time that were relevant to your loved one. For a child or someone you’ve known for a few years, you can divide the time you’ve known them up into years, months or key segments...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>1950-1960</th>
<th>1940-1950</th>
<th>1930-1940</th>
<th>1920-1930</th>
<th>≤ 1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 2:
Select one segment of your loved one’s life to explore at a time. Make copies of the Life Review – Prompts worksheet and write the relevant years and corresponding ages at the top of each one. You can also look up what was happening in the world at that time and think about how those things affected or might have affected them.
Step 3:
A good way to approach Life Review is to pretend you’re a detective and find the “facts” of your loved one’s life. Search your memory for your own experiences, think about stories you’ve heard over the years and/or ask people who might know for their own memories. Respond to each prompt with short phrases or a word or two. Pages numbers noted on the Life Review – Prompts worksheet refer pages in the original Life Design book, which is available at www.lifedesign101.com.

You’ll find that many things fit into multiple categories. The prompts are only there to help you remember and organize your thoughts. Put things in the first place it seems right. It is very important to not censor yourself. Include people and things that were negative along with those you remember with fondness.

Step 4:
Take another look the prompts and this time, specifically think of people who’ve been influential in your loved one’s life. Note these people on the worksheet(s) with the relevant date(s) in a category that seems relevant.

Step 5:
This time look at the prompts and focus on key events and experiences that shaped your loved one’s life. One or more events may stand out clearly as turning points. Don’t stop there though; see if you can find other events and experiences that had an impact on their life.

Step 6:
The next step is to notice the feelings you remember in association with any of the prompts in each of the time periods. It’s normal to feel a rush of emotions, what you imagine your loved one felt and what you – yourself are feeling as you do this exercise. Don’t get lost in your feelings at this point. You can make a date with yourself to come back and enjoy the positive ones or wrestle with the more negative ones at a later time, if you want.

The important thing now is to get down the facts - and feelings are facts. Other people in your life may not have encouraged you to not express your feelings, but feelings are just as real as the events that produced them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIFE REVIEW – PROMPTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write your loved one’s name here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Foods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorite Music / Movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining People, Places &amp; Things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highs &amp; Lows (page 21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning Points (page 23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievements (page 25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Life (page 39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values (page 57-62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons Learned (page 63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Aspects of Their Life (page 74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopes &amp; Dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Mattered To Them? (page 78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Energized / Drained Them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Self &amp; Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice &amp; Injustice Observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patterns &amp; Themes Noted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To obtain additional copies of this worksheet, send an email to info@amybarzach.com.

TAKE A MOMENT TO SEE IF YOU HAVE ANY NEW INSIGHTS
YOU WANT TO CAPTURE ON THIS PAGE FOR NOTES
HIGH & LOWS

Looking at their life, when do you think they felt most positive, alive and excited about life? You can use what you personally know, what you learn from your research and/or reaching out to people who knew them.

☐ Describe the general circumstances in terms of what they were doing, where they were living and who they were involved with at those times.

When did you think they felt least positive about life? What was the situation at that time?

☐ Describe the general circumstances in terms of what they were doing, where they were living and who they were involved with at those times.
TURNING POINTS

People make many choices during their lifetime, some of which are far more crucial than others. A turning point is a fork in the road—a choice point that makes a big difference. If you go to the right, you forego the path to the left. Only sometimes can you come back at a later time and take the path you passed by. In every such choice, there is potential gain and potential loss, and they are seldom equal.

- What were the turning points in your loved one’s life?

- What have been the turning points in your own life? Are you facing a turning point in your life - now or in the near future? If you are, what are the gains and losses you anticipate?
ELEMENTS OF DAILY LIFE

☐ Take time to slowly read over the questions below and reflect on these particular elements of your loved one’s daily life. In each set, circle the one you think or know was true for them. Make notes in the margins to open ended questions. This page can give you unlimited things to journal about. When the loved one who died is a parent, it is often striking to realize how much their perspective and habits, good and bad, consciously and unconsciously, influence our own lives.

1. With time?
   Were they in control of time or controlled by schedules? Did they think most about the past, the present, or the future?

2. With people?
   Were family relationships satisfying or strained? Were friendships meaningful or superficial? Can you name their best friends? Was their social life a pleasure or a burden?

3. With places?
   How did they feel about their physical environment...—at home? —at work? —geographically?

4. With things?
   In terms of material things, how important were they to them? Was their desire for things in balance with their ability to acquire them?

5. With ideas and information?
   Were they in touch with what was going on in the world? Were they open to and stimulated by new ideas? Did they make use of books, magazines, TV and the internet for ongoing intellectual stimulation?

6. With their sense of self?
   Did they mostly praise or criticize themselves?
   Did they feel in control of their life or a victim of circumstances?

7. With responsibilities?
   Were they in conflict over their various responsibilities? Did one part of their life dominate the others? Did they do some things just for themselves? If so, what?

8. With activities?
   Did organizations and institutions play an important part in their life? Did they articulate their preferences or defer to others? What did they enjoy? What did they do for “fun?”

9. With physical health and wellbeing?
   Did they take care of their body? Did they feel good about it? Did they live in a basically “healthy” way? Did they take the time and energy needed to stay physically fit or weren’t able to do that?

10. With spiritual life?
    Did they allow enough quiet time to reflect on what really mattered? Were they at peace? If they’d had the opportunity to change something about their life, what might it have been?

TAKE A MOMENT TO SEE IF YOU HAVE ANY NEW INSIGHTS YOU WANT TO CAPTURE ON THIS PAGE FOR NOTES
VALUES

According to James Vaughan, PhD, co-author of Life Design, values form the backdrop for all the decisions we make in life. Becoming clear about what we value gives us the possibility of directing our lives in more satisfying ways. Our basic value system was formed very early in life. Major contributors for most of us were parents and other family members, neighbors, friends, teachers, members of the clergy, and of course, TV. While it’s accurate to say our values are shaped by those who raised us and by the powerful social forces we experienced, that’s not the total story. Our values are not “given” to us completely. Our values change throughout our lives as we’re bombarded with ideas, suggestions, and demands about what’s important and what to pay attention to.

Every one of us is a living value statement. The way we dress, the way we present ourselves to others, the way we treat others, the things we surround ourselves with, the work we do, the way we spend our leisure time—all these are expressions of our values. In our own unique way, whether we’re conscious of it or not, we’re saying to those we interact with—this is what’s important. So another reason for thinking about values has to do with the kind of influence we have on others. If influencing others in specific ways is important to us, it is valuable to become aware of the values we’re communicating in all of our interactions with them.

You may be surprised to realize that some of the values people resist as children become very dear to them when they are grown up. People can also be pleased to see that they’ve been able to change their values and beliefs as their experience and the world around them has changed. If their childhood (or yours) was painful, they may have tried hard to forget it. The idea of deliberately bringing back painful feelings and frightening emotions may have no appeal to you. All we can say is that by trying to keep a tight lock on the past, people use energy which could be put to better use in the present. The following worksheet is a tool to help you look at your loved one’s values. It is natural for you to become aware of your own values when you are doing this exercise. You are encouraged to make note of the things that come up related to your own values as you do it.

VALUES

☐ What did your loved one value? Look back to the Life Review worksheets you did for your loved one to jog your memory. Put a check mark by the things you imagine or know they valued. Then circle the ones you think are the top three.

Achievement  Fairness  Nature
Adventure / Risk  Fashion  Patience
Affection  Friendship  Peace
Authenticity  Fun  Personal Appearance
Awareness  Health / Fitness  Personal Growth
Beauty  Honesty  Professional Developmer
Comfort / Security  Independence  Pleasure
Commitment  Influence  Power
Courage  Initiative  Privacy
Compassion  Invention  Purpose
Connection  Inspiration  Religion
Creativity  Integrity  Respect
Design  Joy  Responsibility
Discipline  Justice  Serenity
Education  Kindness  Service
Encouragement  Laughter  Spirituality
Energy  Leadership  Solitude
Enlightenment  Learning  Status / Recognition
Empathy  Leisure Time  Taste
Equality  Love  Variety
Experience New Things  Be Loved  Winning
Experiment  Mastery  Work
Family  Money / Possessions  Add your own…
WHAT DID YOUR LOVED ONE LIKE TO DO?

☐ Make a list of things your loved one like to do, both big and little things:

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

WHAT WAS YOUR LOVED ONE GOOD AT?

- Make a list of all the things your loved one was good at doing, regardless of their apparent significance. For example, a woman I know is good at picking up things with her toes. After thinking about that, I remember that she was also resourceful.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
16.
17.
18.
19.
20.
21.
22.
23.
24.
25.
WHAT MATTERED TO YOUR LOVED ONE?

☐ Make a list of all the things your loved one cared about, again big and little things.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.
THE LIFE DESIGN CHECKLIST

☐ Read the checklist below to remind yourself of the multitude of issues that affect a person’s life. While this list may not be complete, it does provide a way of getting in touch with the many areas that contribute to satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with life. As you read through the list, check the items that you imagine or know were most important to your loved one. You can also use what you select as writing prompts to further explore their life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Talents</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Morals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Religious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mystical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th></th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Location</td>
<td></td>
<td>Temperament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td></td>
<td>Awareness - of feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td>Acceptance - of feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surroundings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature</td>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional Patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Needs / Drives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual</th>
<th></th>
<th>Other Issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability - what type</td>
<td></td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability - how much</td>
<td></td>
<td>Risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulateness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of capabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical / Practical</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rigidity / Flexibility</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance - by others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance - of others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People Orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness - to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control - by others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control - of others</td>
<td></td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approachability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Confidence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prejudices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PART II – REMEMBERING, REVIEWING & REFLECTING

☐ Before you move on to Part II – Healing, Connections & Peace, take a few minutes to sit quietly with your memories. Give yourself and your loved one the gift of at least 15 minutes of quiet reflection. When we have experienced loss and the pain of grief, the gateway to our heart is wide open. You can think of it as being 'broken whole' which is the title of one of my next books. After this time of quiet reflection, try writing without editing or censoring yourself. Try to fill up at least one to three pages. You can start here. What you write is likely to give you remarkable insights into your relationship with your loved one and with yourself.

Your feelings (and things /experiences that take your breathe away – both good and bad) are like messengers. Until you receive their message they wait at your door.

John Gray

PART II: HEALING, CONNECTIONS & PEACE

The worksheets that follow lead you through exercises that are seemingly simple and at the same time powerful. If you let them, they can support you in keeping the love and memories, identifying ways to create meaning, honoring your loved one’s life, and at the same time letting go of the pain. Take as much time as you need to work through this process and don’t be afraid to reach out for help. Feel free to email me at info@amybarzach.com.

Before you start this section, I want to share some excerpts from a soon to be published book: THE POWER OF GRIEVING - A Stronger You by MJ Boggini-Atkins, M.Ed., LPC. It is an excellent resource for people who are grieving and includes stories from people who have experienced and healed from all kinds of losses. I highly recommend it. With permission, I have included highlights of the book from different chapters:

Today we have an abundance of death education information and a profession devoted to helping people move through their grief in a healthy way. (People)... can receive guidance and counseling before, during, and after a loss. Yet despite all the helpmates and support systems, we continue to be a society that tends to deny, short circuit or misjudge perfectly normal feelings as abnormal when someone dies. This puts us on the road to unresolved grief, thus complicating our healing process.

The choice to allow the grieving process to unfold lies within all of us. In the midst of tragedy, as we move through excruciating feelings, we realize that, in time, the face of tragedy changes. We have come to understand that this mystery called life can disappear within a blink of an eye. We know our loved ones will always be missed. Our lives are changed forever. Within these undeniable changes, we discover our appreciation for the present, the power to heal, the power to rejoin life, and a newfound face that redefines our strength.

Although some reactions are immediate, it may take moments, days, even months (or years) before deep feelings of pain begin to emerge--the ones of sadness, anger, and, at times, hopelessness. When difficult feelings begin to emerge, what do you do with them? Do you share them? Do you ignore them? Or do you invite them in, allow them to wash over you, and direct your journey toward healing?

How you deal with your emotions is influenced by the present situation, family teachings, the culture, your personality, and the sensitivity of the people around you. You have a choice of when, where, and to whom to express your most intimate sentiments. You could also choose to experience them in solitude as opposed to sharing them. This is a fine line to walk, as too much isolation can add to one’s feeling of loss and alienation. The sharing of what you are going through can lighten your burden and open the (the door for more) compassion toward yourself and others. Some people are stunned, others are paralyzed, and many are angry. Sometimes you feel physical pain. Old illnesses can resurface. Your back may act up or allergies may return. Depression or anxiety or both can grip you. Some people jabber incessantly or burst out in
uncontrollable tears. Still others retreat into their heads, do not feel, and become driven by goal setting and… (professional pursuits that feel more controllable).

All that feelings demand of you are to be experienced and to be released without judgment. The key here is not to judge what you feel. These are simply feelings. They do not define your essence or personality. Emotions come and emotions go. They intensify and diminish. Ride them out. Let them teach you. It is when you refuse to experience them that you move into perilous waters. Ironically, the tears that are not experienced are the ones that can drown you.

Your strength and courage reside in acknowledging, experiencing, and accepting these momentary truths. Allow the symphony of your grief--energies with different intensities and tones--to play out all its notes. Each piece will come to a completion and around the corner will be the next one--and the next. You will reach a point where these notes of grief will become familiar territory, and, although unwelcomed, your ability to tolerate them and let them flow can surprisingly ease your struggle.

Nature has a way of anesthetizing you with its numbing balm when you need it the most--at a time when you are not ready to feel the anguish. Sometimes, it is too much to take in all at once.

At some point, your bubble of equilibrium bursts. Raw pain washes over you. It can rise up unexpectedly and trigger feelings. You are drenched with the reminder of your loss. The intensity and duration of your pain--and when it will come--are dependent upon many factors: the type of relationship you had with your loved ones, the age and the circumstances surrounding their death, your support systems, and whether you have taken the time to grieve or others have allowed you the time to experience your grief. All of these play into your healing. Also, if the relationship has not been a positive one, with many issues unresolved, it may take longer to experience some sense of equilibrium and familiarity of life.

One person in grieving avoids feelings; the other gets so caught up in it, she cannot move on with her life. You can feel either too much or too little. The challenge in dealing with difficult feelings is to find a balance between the two. Continually revolving around in feelings or closing the door on them are both patterns that can keep you stuck. In order to move on with your life, it is necessary to balance and partner your emotions and problem-solving skills with physical activity. Solve the problems you can and let go of the rest. Easier said than done, but by practice and perseverance you will feel less pain, feel more in control, and in some fortunate moments, there will be an ease within the struggle. If at any time in this process you feel frightened by your behavior or question whether your experiences are within the normal range, by all means, talk to someone who has been through grieving or speak with a professional, or do both. In some situations, medication may be recommended as a helpmate to move through this period.

You must remember that your emotions, like the path of a river, should not be forced or halted. You can only follow them where they take you, feel them, talk about them, and especially honor them. Just as a river finds new channels of discovery--so, too, will your feelings. So these wounds will never go away completely, but they should not control your life. They are part of remembrance, the light in your life giving you a nudge to see what is directly in front of you. Embrace the moment. Connect with the living. These moments can light the way to the deepest part of yourself and connect you to a place where you have that special knowledge, a wordless understanding of connection to all.”
HEALING YOUR GRIEF GUIDE

FROM MOURNING TO ETERNAL CONNECTION

Finding ways to stay connected in healthy ways can be a powerful bridge to healing, hope and ultimately a good and meaningful life. In Part I, you spent time remembering and reflecting. What you learned can now be used to develop a sense of being eternally connected to your loved while letting go of some, most or for the lucky ones, all of the pain.

After awhile I decided to believe that I could find meaning in my son’s death, always have a strong bond with him, and imagine myself letting go of the pain. Right after Jonathan died; it felt like I was on a raft in a turbulent sea with overwhelming waves crashing over me all the time. As time went on, the feeling of the waves crashing over me happened less and less often, to a point where now it only happens a few times a year. And since it usually happens on meaningful dates like holidays, his birthday and the anniversary of his death, I can usually make dates with myself where I give myself permission to really feel my feelings.

These “dates” have a ritual built in to end them (for me a walk at the end is my bridge back to remembering Jonathan with love and appreciating the good things in my life). They also have specific starting times and even more important, specific ending times. As a precaution, I set a timer for the ending time and set up two alarms, one at the ending time and another 15 minutes later. I believe in telling the truth so here it is – on the days where “the waves are crashing”, they’re as just overwhelming as they ever were. The good news is that they happen very seldom and I now have a way to manage them.

If ambition, circumstances and support line up for you to do something big, by all means set that as your “perfect world” goal. At the same time, have an easily doable goal that represents the essence of your idea.

When the hospice counselor at the University of Connecticut Health Center encouraged my husband Peter and me to go out to dinner and come up with an idea for a memorial project, we were overwhelmed. It was all we could do to keep Jonathan comfortable. She encouraged us to think of something we could imagine would make him smile. As we passed Cape Cop Fence, we saw a 20 foot long boat play structure – with slides and swings and poles. It looked like so much fun. We decided that we would figure out how to raise money so we could donate one to a school or a park. After weeks of feeling discouraged since we couldn’t make Jonathan better, we were pretty pleased with ourselves for “completing out assignment”.

When we next saw the hospice counselor and told her our idea, she asked us for the essence of it. For us, the essence was a “place where children of all abilities could celebrate life”. “Wonderful” she said and told us “It doesn’t matter what you ended up doing, as long as it helps children of all abilities celebrate life.

We ultimately decided to celebrate my son Jonathan’s life, first by developing Jonathan’s Dream, a 25,000 square foot inclusive playground, and later decided to work with a passionate team of parents and professionals to found a national nonprofit organization to help other communities do the same thing for their children of all abilities. We imagined that in Jonathan’s dreams, he would want children of all abilities to be able to celebrate life together, everywhere!

Throughout the development of our project, we always had other options in our back pocket that honored the essence of our idea including:

- Designing and donating just one piece of inclusive equipment to a playground, the inclusive playground we had for our big idea had more than 25 elements.
- Or volunteering at an inclusive camp, something we could do in one afternoon.

It is important to know that the size or even the philanthropic nature of what you decide to do have nothing to do with its meaning and its healing power. The key is to imagine something that would make your loved one smile. When you come up with the essence of a good idea, you’ll know it by the way it makes you feel.

Memorial projects fall in two major categories:

- A ritual or activity that helps you feel connected.
- A project or actions that make a difference.

On the following page you will find a variety of examples. Use these to help you think about what you might want to do. After you’ve figured it out, it is important to take a step back and identify the essence of your idea and a variety of ways you do it. Then set the intention to complete it if it is a project or an action that makes a difference. Or if it is a ritual or activity to help you feel connected, set the intention to do it in some kind of a regular (without being rigid) way - monthly, quarterly, annually and/or whenever circumstances make you think of it.
THINGS PEOPLE HAVE DONE TO CREATE ETERNAL CONNECTIONS

The following examples could be very meaningful if that is your intention or can be done unconsciously with no connection to your loved one. The people I know who have one or more conscious connections to their loved one(s) tell me it makes it easier to let go of the pain, find the good in their grief, and feel a strong connection to their loved one.

- Since her sister enjoyed gardening and especially loves growing lilacs, a woman plants lilacs and notices every time she sees or smells them anywhere.
- Because his dad used to take him Major League baseball games, a man makes it a point to take his son and grandson every summer.
- The patriarch of a family used to park far out in store parking lots so his car wouldn’t get scratched. Every time his family gets a spot very close to the store or has to park very far away, they remember him.
- A couple who remembers singing carols and unwrapping holiday gifts on Christmas Eve with each of their families, do the same thing at the same time with their children.
- His brother played Billy Joel on his guitar and a man smiles when he hears those songs.
- Remembering the cinnamon bread that her grandmother used to bake, a women drinks cinnamon tea or orders cinnamon toast when she goes out for breakfast.
- When she passes a street sign with her father’s name on it on her way to work, an executive thinks of her dad.
- I think of my friend Karen every time I buckle my seat belt because she died in a car accident before she graduated from college. Seat belts were not as universally worn then as they are now, and she might have lived if she’d been wearing one.
- Let me end this list of examples by saying that you can also do something special on your loved one’s birthday or the anniversary of their death. It can be as simple as eating their favorite desert, wearing their favorite color or reading their favorite book.

If you know of other examples or have done something yourself, please consider emailing it to me at info@amybarzach.com so we can help more people.

It’s your turn. Write down the 1st thing that pops into your mind.

Read what you wrote and close your eyes. Remember being with your loved one. Take as long as you need to and then write down anything else that you think of.
MEMORIAL PROJECTS PEOPLE HAVE DONE THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Examples:

- His wife wasn’t afraid of anything and loved doing 100 mile bike rides. He’s not that ambitious but he thinks of her when he rides his bike or steps out of his comfort zone.
- Knowing her sister loved to sing a woman organizes mini concerts (by her or with a group of friends) regularly at a local nursing home.
- Because his brother was blind, a man participates in a walkathon to raise money for guide dogs every year in his brother’s honor.
- In honor of their grandmother who loved to host holiday dinners at her house, a family helps make and serve Thanksgiving dinner at a local senior center for people who have no family to celebrate with.
- Growing up with a father who was a Boy Scout, a teenager becomes an Eagle Scout and builds benches for a bike trail in his community as his Eagle project.
- To celebrate the life of his good friend who was always happy, one young man makes it a practice to nicely smile at people he passes them on the street.

Recent real world examples:

- After their son died in a tragic school bus accident where he suffered blunt trauma during the crash, one family got legislation passed to require seatbelts in school buses.
- In memory of a friend who loved to dance, her college friends and the people who to work with her raise money to support dance therapy for children in hospitals.
- Another family whose daughter loved music and the arts quietly sponsor programs in their community to make music and the arts available to more children.
- On what would have been Jonathan’s 1st birthday, we donated books to children in the hospital and brought a guitar player to entertain them. It made a difficult day much better and now we regularly donate books to children in homeless shelters.

If you know of other examples or have done something yourself, please consider emailing it to me at info@amybarzach.com so we can help more people.

Same instructions. Write down the 1st thing that pops into your mind.

________________________________________________________

Read what you wrote and close your eyes. Remember being with your loved one.
Take as long as you need to and then write down anything else you think

HEALING YOUR GRIEF GUIDE

of.

**AUTOMATIC WRITING**

When I was first introduced to this activity, I thought it was strange. After being trained on how to do it with students and coaching clients, I’ve come to the conclusion that it is a powerful tool. There are two different ways to look at automatic writing. Some people do it and just imagine what they think their loved one might say. Others feel very strong connections to their loved one during this exercise and see it as direct communication. In either case, people who do it regularly find it the very helpful. I try to do it as a ritual on the first of every month since my son was born on the 1st of April. Here are the steps:

1) Make a list of the questions you might want to ask your loved one. Try to come up with 5 to 7 questions. Then do something that reminds you of them, it could be as simple as listening to music they liked and having a cup of their favorite tea.

2) This part can feel a little forced or fake at first but give it a try. Thousands of people have found it to be very helpful.

3) The more you do automatic writing, the easier and more enjoyable it gets. Write your questions in the shaded boxes below and put your loved ones initials in the top left corner of each of the white boxes.

4) And finally, imagine what you think your loved one would say and write the answers to your questions in the white boxes. If you want more worksheets, send an email to info@amybarzach.com.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Loved One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Loved One</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## AUTOMATIC WRITING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You</th>
<th>Your Loved One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Your Loved One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Your Loved One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>Your Loved One</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PEACE LETTER

Shortly after my son Jonathan died, I wrote him what I called an “attempting to find peace letter”. Before I sat down to write it, I outlined everything I remembered from the day he was born until the day he died. I wanted to say all the things I hadn’t had a chance to tell him. I was afraid to share my very personal letter but knew that if I did, it might help you write their own.

I wrote about what meant the most to me and also what I wished had been different. I also included what I was sorry for. It was very cathartic. Years later I discovered the Grief Recovery Handbook, The Action Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Losses by John W. James and Russell Friedman. The authors give grievers specific steps they can take to, as they say, “complete the grieving process and accept loss”. As it says on the back cover, “For those ready to regain a sense of aliveness, the principles outlined here (in their remarkable book) make this a life-changing handbook.”

It outlined many actions, some of which I had done before I found their book, liking writing a letter to your loved one. The authors taught you how to write what they called a completion letter. It was everything I had done intuitively but described with easy to follow instructions and valuable perspective. The rest of the Grief Recovery Handbook is the same caliber and will help you learn how to recover from your loss. I purchase it to give to friends and family when they’ve experienced any kind of loss.

Relationship Memory Tracker
In Part I of this Healing Grief Guide, you had the opportunity to explore your loved one’s life from a variety of perspectives. Now it is time to analyze your own relationship with your loved one. Here is how I did it when I was preparing to write my letter to Jonathan in 1995. I took a large piece of paper and penciled in a three column table. I put dates in the middle column. Then I labeled the left column Positive Memories and the right column Painful or Negative Memories. Since I was left handed I did it this way so when I used my left hand, it could serve as a reminder of the positive memories. Since Jonathan was a child, I broke his life up into months, and also made separate entries for my pregnancy, before his diagnosis, after his diagnosis, and after he died. This is similar to what the Life Review exercise in Part I invited you to do for your loved one. After that, I wrote short bullets about my experiences with him next to each segment of his life to help me get started. Later on I did a lot of journaling using these entries as prompts. The coach II worked with encouraged me to come up with at least 3 positive memories and 3 negative memories. It was easier to come up with positive things. On the next page you will have an opportunity to do the same thing for your relationship with your loved one. Use as much paper as you need.
## Relationship Memory Tracker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive Memories</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Painful / Negative Memories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Pieces of a “Peace” Letter
In my letter I included things I just needed to say, things I wanted to apologize for, and things I needed to let go of. I did it intuitively so I’m not sure back then how I would have explained how to do something that was so painful – to think about and even harder to do. In the *Grief Recovery Handbook*, they have instructions for writing what they call a *completion letter* in the 9th chapter of their book. In the eight chapters before this they lead you through powerful exercises that prepare you. I didn’t discover the *Grief Recovery Handbook* until 2001 but I had the benefit of an amazing hospice counselor/coach who helped me do many of the things the *Grief Recovery Handbook* describes so eloquently. If you haven’t had the benefit of excellent professional support to prepare you for writing a letter like this, and even if you have, I strongly recommend buying the *Grief Recovery Handbook* and following its steps before you write your letter.

If you’re feeling a little overwhelmed at this point, you might want to skip ahead to Part III: *Putting the Good in Grief to Work*. Doing this will give you a chance to focus on yourself for awhile and you’ll find the exercises inspiring, empowering and energizing. I use many of them with my private coaching clients and in the *Finding Your Passion* workshops I teach.

Things I Needed & Wanted To Say
In notes for my letter I started out by saying things like:

*Jonathan, for me to be at peace with your death, there are some things I want/need to say to you. Jonathan, I want you to know that through you, I learned that everyone, regardless of ability or disability, should be able to play – even adults – even me. I still don’t do enough playing but I have a growing awareness of the idea and that I deserve more play into my life. Jonathan I need to tell you that I felt more in touch with God and my sacred self when you were with me and I’m not sure how to do that without you.*

Think of your loved one and write out what you want and need to say to them. This letter and its pieces do not have to be perfect. And if you don’t like what you did the 1st time you can do it again or revise what you wrote.
I'm Sorry Apologies
Since I was writing to a child, I used the words, "I'm sorry". Here is the definition I found for "sorry" and the related word – "apology" in the Encarta Dictionary:

sor-ry (adjective)
1. apologetic
   feeling or expressing regret for an action…
2. sympathetic
   feeling or expressing sympathy or empathy, especially because of something that has happened

sor-ry (interjection)
1. used as an apology
   used as an apology for hurting… somebody

a-pol-o-gy (noun)
1. statement expressing remorse
   a written or spoken statement expressing remorse for something
2. formal justification
   a formal defense or justification for something

It was especially hard to do this part of the letter but I set an intention to be open-minded, pretended to be courageous and had in faith the coach I was working with. It may not be easy but I give you my word that when you are ready and able to write a letter like this, it will really help you heal your grief.

Think of at least 1 to 3 things you want to say you are sorry or apologize for.

I apologize for:

____________________________________________________________________________________

I am sorry that:

____________________________________________________________________________________

I apologize for:

____________________________________________________________________________________
Stop Being ________ Sentences / Pardons

My letter also included things that I was going to try to stop feeling bad about. Kind of like I was pardoning my son and his death for breaking my heart.

Here is what I said in my letter to Jonathan:

Jonathan, I have to stop feeling sad all the time and being mad at you for leaving us. Jonathan, I pardon you for needing so much attention. After meeting with the doctors, I understood what was happening and it wasn’t a burden. But before that you never seemed to be able to sleep and I was so tired. I didn’t realize anything was wrong back then. I wish I could have those hours with you back.

I knew what I meant but am sharing a quote I found in the Grief Recovery Handbook because once again they’ve done an excellent job explaining something I did intuitively. The authors used the term “forgiveness” which is a good way to think about this.

“… forgiveness is giving up the hope of a different or better yesterday. Most people seem to convert forgive into condone. According to Merriam-Webster’s Tenth Collegiate Dictionary: Forgive means to cease to feel resentment against (an offender) and Condone means to treat as if trivial, harmless or of no importance. Any resentment of past events will limit and restrict our ability to participate fully in life. Successful recovery requires completion of the pain rather than retention of the resentment. Our continued resentment and inability to forgive hurts us….”

Write down what you might want to stop being/doing or who/what you want to forgive:

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________
Writing Your Own Letter
When you are done with all of this and either feel ready to decide or are willing to “pretend” you’re ready, sit down in a quiet place (perhaps with nice music) and copy each of the things you wrote down in the form of a letter. I recommend writing it by hand. Finish your letter with something simple. In my case, I wrote “I lmiss you and I will always love you. It is time for me to say goodbye.” Again the commonality between what I did in 1995 and what the Grief Recovery Handbook recommends is striking. It says “… end your letter effectively. For example, I love you, I miss you. Or I have to go now and I have to let go of the pain. It is important to end the letter with Good Bye and their name.”

Having Someone You Trust Witness You Reading Your Letter
Read the letter, preferably in person to someone you completely trust or a therapist, coach or clergy. I’ll refer you to the Grief Recovery Handbook one last time. In Chapter 12 they outline very specific guidelines for the listening partner (the person who will witness you reading your letter) and the talking partner (the person who is reading their letter). Tell the person who is your witness to let you feel your feelings and to just be there to support you as you read your letter. That you want them to just be a silent witness as the grief you’ve kept inside is released.

My letter to my son Jonathan is on the next page. It is hard for me to share this letter with people I don’t know but through grief, we are all kindred spirits. I trust that you read it with compassion.
My dear Jonathan,

For me to be at peace with your death Jonathan, there are some things I want and need to say to you. Jonathan, when you died, it broke my heart and there were some days when I wasn’t sure I wanted to live without you. Jonathan, I want you to know that through you, I learned that everyone, regardless of ability or disability, should be able to play – even adults – even me. I still don’t do enough playing but I have a growing awareness of the idea and that I deserve more play into my life. Jonathan I need to tell you that I felt more in touch with God and my sacred self when you were with me and I’m not sure how to do that without you.

Jonathan, I have to stop feeling sad all the time and being mad at you for leaving us. I’m not really mad at you, I hope you understand but I needed to say this to you... Jonathan, I pardon you for needing so much attention. After meeting with the doctors, I understood what was happening and it wasn’t a burden. But before that you never seemed to be able to sleep and I was so tired. I didn’t realize anything was wrong back then. I wish I could have those hours with you back.

Jonathan, I am sorry that Daddy and I gave you the spinal muscular atrophy genes that killed you. It wasn’t our fault and we didn’t know that we did it when you were born but I wish there was something we could have done differently. Jonathan, I am sorry I didn’t spend every minute I could with you when you were alive, especially the night before you died. Everyone told us to sleep at home one night to recharge our batteries. It seems like a good idea at the time, and my dear friend Gail stayed with you but I can never get that time with you back. Jonathan, I am sorry that I sometimes let my grief overwhelmed me. You were the happiest person I ever met and I know you would want me to celebrate life. But some days it is just too hard. I am trying. Jonathan, thank you for waiting for me to get to the hospital and smiling at me just before you died. It meant a lot to me.

I miss you and I will always love you. It is time for me to say goodbye.

Mom
PART III: PUTTING THE GOOD IN GRIEF TO WORK

Reviewing the life of your loved one often leads to insights about your own life. This section includes exercises for self reflection. Refer back to worksheets in Part I if you are looking for other things to help you. Additional resources for ‘learning to live by choice instead of by chance’ are available at www.lifedesign101.com.

What’s the best way to clarify your values?

EXPERIENCE A SIGNIFICANT EVENT!

When something significant happens (whether it’s positive or negative), it inevitably changes our perception of the world. And, while there’s no guarantee, these significant events usually bring greater clarity about our values—about what’s really important in our lives.

Sometimes this re-evaluation is obvious, especially when the event is life-altering, like the death of a loved one, being fired from your job, a painful divorce, or being told you have a terminal disease. But you’re also affected by the positive events in your life, like getting married, becoming a parent, getting a promotion, or achieving some important goal.

☐ On the following page, make a list of some of the significant events you’ve experienced and try to determine what you learned about your values in the process. Start with the death of your loved one. What you write doesn’t have to be the ultimate lessons. For now, write what comes to mind. You can always go back and do this worksheet again.
## Clarifying Your Own Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significant Event:</th>
<th>What I learned from it:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The death of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write their name here</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### THE LIFE DESIGN CHECKLIST GRID – TO LOOK AT YOUR OWN LIFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where you are:</th>
<th>Where you want to go:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following page provides an opportunity for you to be a little philosophical about life—and to see what you can learn from your own philosophy. Read each incomplete sentence and finish it with the first thing that comes to your mind. Don’t second-guess yourself or reject any of your ideas. The ideas that just pop into your mind are likely to be more accurate (on a deeper level) than a “calculated” response could hope to be.

Live as if you were living already for the second time and as if you had acted the first time as wrongly as you are about to act now.

Viktor Frankl
ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. The single most important thing in the world to me is

2. The purpose of life is

3. My greatest talent is

4. The greatest contribution I could make in this world is

5. I try very hard each day to

6. The 3 things I would most like to accomplish in my lifetime are

7. The single greatest truth I have uncovered in life is

8. My goal for the next 5 years is to

9. My greatest blessing is

10. When I am 85 years old, I would like to look back on my life and think
IF I COULD LIVE IT OVER

By Nadine Stair (age 85)

If I had to live my life over again,
I’d dare to make more mistakes next time.

I’d relax. I would limber up.
I would be sillier than I have been.

I would take fewer things seriously.
I would take more chances. I would take more trips.

I would climb more mountains, swim more rivers.
I would eat more ice cream and less beans.

I would perhaps have more actual troubles,
but I’d have fewer imaginary ones.

You see, I’m one of those people who live seriously and sanely,
hour after hour, day after day.

Oh, I’ve had my moments. And if I had it to do over again,
I’d have more of them.

In fact, I’d try to have nothing else, just moments, one after another,
instead of living so many years ahead of each day.

I’ve been one of those persons who never goes anywhere without
a thermometer, a hot water bottle, a raincoat and a parachute.

If I had it to do again, I would travel lighter than I have.

If I had to live my life over, I would start barefoot earlier in the spring
and stay that way later in the fall.

I would go to more dances. I would ride more merry-go-rounds.
I would pick more daisies.
WRITING YOUR OWN OBITUARY

☐ First, write your obituary on the following page as you think it might appear if you died right now. Remember, an obituary is a notice of the death of a person, usually with a brief biographical sketch, cause of death, and reference to close family and/or friends.

☐ Next, imagine you live for another 20 years. Write the obituary you think would appear at that time, and when you write it include anything and everything you might want to have done, been or had in it.

O people, you are dying! Live while you can. But don’t delay, time is not on your side. How could I not be among you?

Ted Rosenthal
WRITING YOUR OWN OBITUARY

Obituary if I died right now:

Obituary if I lived till I’m 85 years old:

What life experiences, accomplishments or relationships were included in the second obituary that were missing from the first? What steps might you take to increase the chances of having these experiences? These are great questions to do as ‘morning writing’ when your status quo defenses are not yet engaged.

There is no way to prevent dying. But the cure for the fear of death is to make sure that you have lived.

Harold Kushner

IF ONLY...

Imagine you’ve just been told you have a terminal illness and only have a month to live. What would feel the most unfinished about your life?

☐ Describe your thoughts in terms of “If only…” (“If only I had...” or “If only I could...”)

If only...

If only...

If only...

If only...

If only...

If only... There is always sunshine, only we must do our part: we must move into it.

Clara Louise Burnham
MAKING IT HAPPEN

What stands out as your strongest wish when you look at your answers to “if only?”

What goals might you set for yourself that would move you toward achieving that wish?

What might stop you from actively working toward these goals?

How important is it to you to work toward eventually finding a way to fulfill your wish for your life? Try to be as honest with yourself as possible; don’t give up unless you acknowledge that whatever is standing in your way is in fact more important to you than achieving your “if only”.

WHAT ARE YOUR ASSETS?

Most of us aren’t very good at using all our assets. We tend to be aware of only a few areas of strength, when we actually have a large pool from which to draw.

☐ The list on the following page is intended to trigger your thinking about the many assets you can use to pursue your goals in life. By each item, make note of something about yourself in that area that you could use to support your efforts. This is no time to be modest; give yourself the benefit of the doubt. Try to appreciate the strengths others have seen in you that you haven’t previously acknowledged. You can increase your belief in yourself by recognizing and using the wide range of assets at your disposal.

New beginnings are accessible to everyone, and everyone has trouble with them. Much as we may wish to make a new beginning, some part of us resists doing so as though we were making the first step toward disaster. Our fear is that real change destroys the old ways in which we established our security.

It is unrealistic to expect someone to make a beginning like a sprinter coming out of the starting blocks. Even when the outer situation is complete—you’re on the new job, you’re finally married, you’re in the new house—the inner beginnings are still going on. It is a time to be gentle with yourself or with the other person, a time for the little supports and indulgences that make things happen easier.

The transition process is really a loop in the life-journey, a going out and away from the main flow for a time and then coming around and back.

Bill Bridges
WHAT ARE YOUR ASSETS?

1. Skills & Talents:

2. Intelligence:

3. Motivation:

4. Friends:

5. Education:

6. Family:

7. Experiences:

8. Appearance:

9. Health:

10. Material:

HOW DO YOU BLOCK YOURSELF?

1. Conflicting desires / lack of clear priorities
2. Focus on short term satisfactions
3. Fear of unknown consequences
4. Fear of failing
5. Impatience / trying to reach ultimate goals too fast
6. Lack of awareness of choices
7. Unwillingness to accept help
8. Blaming others
9. Rationalization when the going gets tough
10. Being too general with plans
11. Procrastination
12. Lack of a consistent plan/strategy
13. Poor support system
14. Self punishment
15. Low self-image
16. Depression / feelings of hopelessness
17. Poor physical condition
18. Not setting goals
19. Setting unrealistic goals
20. Being too rigid/unyielding
21. Overconfidence
22. Lack of confidence
23.
24.
25.
LIFE DESIGN MODEL FOR BUILDING A SUPPORT SYSTEM

“No man (or woman) is an island.” We know this is true, but at no time is it more critical than when you are wrestling with grief or unresolved loss, or when you are thinking about making significant changes in your life. You need to gather around you those who will be able to support you—and be on guard against those who will (either consciously or inadvertently) sabotage your efforts.

☐ Use the following page to write down the names of some of the people who can be allies in your efforts to reach your goals. (The stronger the supporter, the closer to “ME” their names will appear in the center of the circle.) You might write down the names of potential saboteurs outside the circle as a reminder to avoid involving these people. It will also be helpful to make a note by the name of each supporter as to the type of support they can offer: to challenge, inspire, encourage, etc.

☐ Divide the circle up and label each piece of the pie with the various segments of your life – family, professional, neighborhood, associations you belong to, childhood friends, college friends, etc. This can help explore all of your potential supporters.

☐ Finally, be sure to talk directly to each person you have identified as part of your support system, telling them about your goals and asking for whatever specific kind of support you would like them to provide.

*Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort, of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but to pour them all out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then, with the breath of kindness, blow the rest away.*

*George Eliot*
HEALING YOUR GRIEF GUIDE

HEALING YOUR GRIEF GUIDE PLANNING WORKSHEET

Something I want to do to help me further my healing: ____________________________ Date: ______

Why it's important to me:

Strategies I will use:
1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________

Specific steps I will take: When:
1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________
4. __________________________________________

Help I need from others: Who: When:
1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. __________________________________________

How I'll know I'm making progress:
1. __________________________________________
2. __________________________________________
3. ______________________________________________________

Things that could block me from reaching this goal:

I'll know I'm successful when… (specify an observable or measurable criteria):

My intention is to reach it by… (note a specific date):

**ASSESSMENT**

For your benefit fill out this assessment and use it as a barometer of your progress. To help me further refine these materials as I continue to help people who grieving heal, please fill out this assessment and email it to me at info@amybarzach.com. Each person who does will be eligible for monthly Healing Grief group coaching telephone sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
<th>E-mail:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

When you started this guide, what was your intention for what you wanted to accomplish and what was your intention for how you wanted to be when you were doing it?

What did you accomplish? How did you feel about what you accomplished?

New insights:

What is still incomplete?

What are your intentions going forward? Today, this week, this month, the next 90 days…

Suggestions you would like to make for future editions of this *Healing Grief Guide*: