

# Write a Letter When You're Grieving

## What to Know

This is a hard time because you are coping with the death of someone you love. You might feel overwhelmed by waves of sadness, confusion, shock, disbelief, and even anger. Maybe the only thing you can do right now is cry.

You might want to hide your emotions or act "fine" when you're really not OK.

It's OK to cry, distance yourself, and do what brings you comfort, as long as you don't harm yourself.

Here are some ideas that might help you cope.

**Participate in rituals.** Memorial services, funerals, wakes, and other traditions help people get through the first few days following a death, and honor the person who died. Just being in the presence of other people who knew your loved one can be comforting.

**Express and release your emotions.** Don't worry if doing certain things is painful because it brings back memories of the person you lost. It's OK to cry and it's natural to feel upset. After a while, it becomes less painful.

**Talk about it.** You might find it helpful to share stories about the loved one you lost, or talk about your feelings. But sometimes you might not feel like talking, and that's OK, too.

If you don't feel like talking, find ways to express your emotions and thoughts. Write in a journal, or write a song, poem, or tribute about your loved one.

**Join a support group.** You might want to join a grief support group. Ask a parent, school counselor, or religious leader how to find one. Check out [www.dougy.org](http://www.dougy.org) for resources.

**Preserve memories.** Create a memorial or tribute to the person who died by planting a tree or garden, or honor the person another way way, like taking part in a charity walk. You might want to make a memory box or folder. Include mementos, photos, quotes, or anything else.

In this exercise, you will write a letter to the person. You might want to include your feelings, things you want to say, or maybe thank your loved one for being part of your life.

## What to Do

It can be helpful to write a letter to say things to the person who has died. It might make you feel better - and feel a little bit more in control of the situation. You can even write the letter with someone else who has experienced the loss.

Who might that be? \_\_\_\_\_

If you decide to write the letter with someone else, sit down together and share what you would like to say before writing your letter.

What are some things you'd like to include in the letter?

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You can write the letter by yourself, but writing the letter with someone else will help you both talk about how you're feeling. You can share ideas about how to manage those feelings and talk about special memories.

You might want to include drawings or stickers, use bright colored pens or markers, or put special keepsakes in the envelope.

Once you have written your letter, decide what you want to do with it. For example, you might want to keep it in a special place and re-read it together in the future.

On the next page, write your letter. You can make a copy if you need more space, or use additional pieces of paper.



How did you feel when you were writing the letter?

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Did this activity help you cope with your emotions? Why or why not?

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What are you going to do with your letter?

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If you decided to write the letter with someone else, was it a positive experience? Why or why not?

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What are some other things you can do to honor your loved one?

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