

A PRINTABLE SELF-HELP PACK

Grief Toolkit

When It Comes Out as Anger and Feels Like Too Much

A gentle, practical companion for grief that arrives sideways — as anger, as overwhelm, as mourning rules that don't fit — with tools for feeling it in doses you can carry.

INSIDE THIS PACK

- Why grief so often shows up as anger — and what the anger is carrying
- Waves, doses, and the fear that grief will swallow you
- A grief window you can open and close on purpose
- When your culture's mourning rules don't fit — keep, adapt, set down
- Rituals within reach when the traditional one isn't
- A 14-day gentle tracker, reflections, and 6 pocket cards

A printable self-help pack for grieving in your own way, at your own pace, in your own key.

How to Use This Toolkit

Someone you love is gone, and grief is not arriving the way anyone told you it would. Maybe it keeps coming out as anger — at the doctors, at the family, at the person themselves, at nothing you can name. Maybe you are holding it at arm's length because you are certain that if you let it in, it will take you under. Maybe the people around you have rules about how this is supposed to be done — how long, how loud, how visible — and none of the rules fit the shape of what you are carrying. This pack was written for all three of those, and for the ways they tangle together.

One thing this toolkit will never do is put you on a schedule. Grief does not move through tidy stages, and there is no deadline you are missing. These pages are tools, not homework — pick up the one that fits the day.

Getting started

1. **Print what you need.** The whole pack or single pages. Every page stands alone.
2. **Read the four education pages that come right after this one.** About fifteen minutes. They cover what grief actually is, why it so often arrives as anger, why it will not actually drown you, and what happens when culture and grief disagree. The worksheets make more sense after them.
3. **Know how to stop.** If any page stirs up more than it settles: open your eyes, put both feet on the floor, name five things you can see, and put the page down. Stopping is not failing — the page will keep.
4. **Go in doses.** This pack is built around the idea that you are allowed to grieve a little at a time. Nothing here asks you to open everything at once.
5. **Keep the Riding the Wave page within reach.** It is the one built for the moments that ambush you.

A suggested path, if you want one: Week 1 — the four education pages, then Naming What Was Lost. Week 2 — The Anger Map and Letting Anger Move. Week 3 — Grief in Doses and Riding the Wave. Week 4 — the culture pages and Rituals Within Reach. The tracker and Weekly Reflection run alongside from whenever you start them. Skipping around is also fine — this is a toolkit, not a curriculum.

One honest heads-up

Grief is heavy work, and it was never meant to be carried entirely alone. If at any point it comes with thoughts of harming yourself or of not wanting to be here, put the pages down and call or text 988 (Canada and the US) — free, confidential, 24/7. The page "When Grief Needs Company" is about all the other kinds of help, and there is no prize for not needing any of them.

I am starting this toolkit on (date):

The person or loss this grief belongs to — a name, a nickname, whatever feels right:

What Grief Actually Is

Waves, not stages

Grief is what love does when the person it was for is out of reach. It is not a disorder, not a weakness, and not a task you can fail. It is the other half of attachment — and it is as individual as the relationship it comes from, which is why nobody else's grief, not even inside your own family, looks quite like yours.

The stages myth

You have probably heard that grief moves through five stages — denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance — and you may have already worried that you are doing them wrong or out of order. Here is the useful truth: those stages began as observations of people facing their own dying, and were later stretched into a schedule for the bereaved that their author never intended. Real grief does not follow a syllabus. It comes in **waves** — rising, cresting, easing — triggered by anniversaries, songs, smells, paperwork, nothing at all. Waves get further apart and softer over time, mostly, unevenly, with ambushes. A terrible day two years in does not mean you have gone backwards. It means a wave came.

There is more than one way to grieve

Some people grieve in tears and talking — they need to feel it and say it. Some grieve in tasks and doing — they build the shed, plan the memorial, sort the finances, and feel it sideways while their hands are busy. Many people are a mix. Every one of these is real grieving. Not crying does not mean not loving; crying constantly does not mean falling apart. And early numbness — feeling nothing, functioning strangely well — is an ordinary opening to grief, not proof that something is wrong with you.

More was lost than the person

Every major loss is a bundle. You lose the person, and with them a role (the one who made the calls), a daily rhythm, a future you were counting on, sometimes a version of yourself. Grief keeps finding new corners because there are genuinely new corners to find. The next worksheet makes this visible.

The way my grieving actually looks — tears, tasks, numbness, anger, all of it:

You are not grieving wrong. You are grieving in your own key — the only key this was ever going to be in.

When Grief Comes Out as Anger

The unwelcome, ordinary face of grief

Of all the ways grief shows up, anger is the one people are least prepared for and most ashamed of. Sadness gets casseroles and condolences. Anger gets alarm. And yet listen to people who speak honestly about their grief, and fury keeps appearing in the mix — at the illness, at the hospital, at the driver, at God, at the family, at the friend who said the stupid thing, at the stranger laughing on the bus as if the world had not ended. Sometimes at the person who died. Especially at the person who died.

Why anger, of all things

Anger is not a malfunction of grief. It usually has jobs:

- **Anger has energy where sadness has none.** Despair is a void; anger is a force. When the pain is unbearable, the self sometimes reaches for the feeling that comes with fuel in it.
- **Anger has a target where loss has nothing.** Death gives you nowhere to file the protest. Anger finds an address — any address — because a protest with an address feels more survivable than one without.
- **Anger is the bodyguard.** It stands in front of the tender things — the missing, the guilt, the helplessness, the terror of a world where this can happen. It guards the door so you do not have to feel them all at once.
- **And some of it is simply justice.** It IS unfair. They should be here. Part of your anger is not a symptom of anything — it is an accurate reading of the situation.

Anger at the one who died

This is the anger people hide deepest: furious at them for leaving, for not going to the doctor sooner, for the drinking, for the risk they took, for dying before the argument was resolved. If your person died by suicide, the anger can arrive tangled with guilt and questions that have no answers. Hear this clearly: **being angry at someone you love — even now — does not mean you loved them less, and it does not dishonour them.** Anger and love are not opposites here. Most of the time, the anger is love, roaring.

Where my anger has been going lately — said out loud or not:

If your anger ever frightens you, spills onto people you love, or turns toward harming yourself or anyone else — that is the signal to bring in help, not to grip harder alone. The page 'When Grief Needs Company' is the map, and if there are thoughts of self-harm, call or text 988 (Canada and the US), 24/7.

The Fear of Drowning

"If I let myself feel it, it will swallow me"

Many grieving people are not avoiding grief because they feel too little. They are holding a door shut because they are certain that what is behind it is bottomless: *if I start crying, I will never stop. If I let it in, I will not be able to function, keep my job, parent my kids. It will take me under.* So they stay busy, stay composed, stay two steps ahead of it — and grow exhausted from the holding.

The fear deserves a real answer, not a pep talk. Here it is.

Grief comes in waves — even at its worst

Feelings, including catastrophic ones, move like water: they rise, crest, and ease. The body cannot hold peak emotion indefinitely — intensity climbs, peaks, and comes down, and this remains true even when the grief itself is enormous. Many people who finally let the tears come discover something they could not have believed from behind the door: the crying stops on its own. Not forever — another wave comes. But *this* wave ends, and you are still there. The fear says "it will never stop." The waves keep saying otherwise, wave after wave, and the Riding the Wave page will help you collect your own evidence. And one honest addition: if your waves truly are not easing — if week after week the intensity stays at first-day height and life cannot restart around it — that is not proof the fear was right about you. It is a sign this grief needs more hands than yours, and the page "When Grief Needs Company" was written for exactly that.

You are allowed to grieve in doses

Healthy grieving is not one long submersion. It moves back and forth: time spent facing the loss — the tears, the memories, the paperwork of the heart — and time spent tending the life that continues — work, meals, errands, even laughter. **The back-and-forth is not avoidance. The back-and-forth IS grieving.**

Distraction, breaks, a funny show, an evening where you think about none of it: these are not betrayals of the person. They are the other half of the rhythm, and this pack will help you do both halves on purpose.

And if you feel too little

The same fear has a quieter twin: feeling almost nothing and being alarmed by that. Numbness, especially early, is grief too — the system pacing itself. It tends to thaw in its own time, usually in waves, usually when it is safe enough to.

What I am most afraid would happen if I let the grief all the way in:

One fear needs a different page than this one: if a wave ever comes with thoughts of harming yourself or of not wanting to be here, that is not a wave to ride alone — call or text 988 (Canada and the US), free and confidential, 24/7.

Grief and Culture

When the mourning rules don't fit the mourner

Nobody grieves in a vacuum. Every family, culture, faith, and country hands its mourners a set of rules — some spoken, most not: how long grief should last, how visible it may be, who is allowed to weep and who must stay composed, who organizes and who is comforted, what may be said about the dead, what happens at the graveside, what the first year requires. These rules are not the enemy. They are what ritual is *for* — a shape that carries you when you cannot carry yourself, a calendar that tells the community when to show up. When the rules fit, they are a handrail.

And when they do not fit, they pinch — hard, and usually invisibly:

- **Timeline pinch.** Your tradition may mourn for a set season — days, forty days, a year — while the country you live in gives three days of bereavement leave and expects composure by Monday. Or the reverse: the people around you are ready for you to be "better" while your tradition, and your heart, are barely getting started. Told you grieve too long by one side, too briefly by the other.
- **Display pinch.** Expected to wail when you are a quiet griever. Expected to be composed when you are coming apart. Praised as "so strong" for a silence that is actually costing you everything.
- **Role pinch.** "Be strong for your mother." The eldest who must host the mourners at their own person's funeral. The men taught that grief in a man may only look like work or anger. The one holding everyone else's grief with nowhere to set their own.
- **Distance pinch.** Grieving far from home: the funeral happened on another continent, the grave is unvisitable, the rituals need a community and a place that are not here, and you are mourning someone in a country where nobody ever knew them.
- **Faith pinch.** Anger at God arriving in the middle of a faith that feels like it forbids it — while the community's comfort and your own doubt sit side by side in the same room. If this is you, it may help to know that lament — grief argued out loud, even at God — has an old and honoured place in many of the world's faith traditions; for many mourners it has been part of faith, not its opposite.

One more pinch hides inside families: the same loss, grieved in different keys under one roof — one person in tears, one in tasks, one in silence — each quietly hurt that the others are "doing it wrong."

The rule around me that pinches most right now:

Sometimes the misfit is not your tradition — it is a world around you that has no patience for anyone's. Both directions are real, and the worksheets ahead work on both.

Naming What Was Lost

The whole bundle, not just the headline

A blank is information, not a failure. If a line gives you nothing today, skip it — the page will keep.

Every major loss is a bundle. The person is the headline, but grief keeps finding new corners because more was genuinely lost: roles, routines, futures, versions of you. Unnamed losses do not disappear — they just ache namelessly. This page is a map, not a wallowing exercise: you can only grieve what you let yourself see.

The person this page is about, in whatever words are yours — their name, what you called them, who they were to you:

The rest of the bundle

What else was lost with them	What it meant to me
A role they played (the one who called first, who fixed things, who knew me longest)	
A daily rhythm (the call, the meal, the sound of them in the house)	
A piece of the future (the holidays, the milestones they will miss)	
A version of me (who I was with them, who I was becoming)	
A place, an object, a language, a connection to somewhere	
Something nobody else would think to count	

The loss inside the bundle that nobody around me seems to see:

The loss I have not let myself look at yet:

If grief keeps arriving from surprising directions, it is not because you are doing this badly. It is because more was lost than the world's short word for it — and each piece gets its own goodbye, in its own time.

The Anger Map

Where it points, and what it carries

Ground rule: this page is a private map, not a set of instructions. Writing "I am furious at her for leaving" hurts no one, changes nothing you don't choose to change, and sets down a weight. If it stirs up more than it settles — eyes open, feet on the floor, name five things you can see, and put the page down.

Anger in grief almost always points somewhere — and underneath the pointing there is almost always something more tender: missing them, guilt, fear, helplessness, plain unfairness. Mapping both layers is the whole skill. Nothing written here has to be fair, reasonable, or ever spoken aloud. Maps are allowed to be ugly. That is what makes them accurate.

Example: "At my brother — he barely visited. Underneath: I am afraid I did not visit enough either."

Where the anger points	What it says, unedited	What might be underneath

Common addresses, if it helps to check: the illness or the accident. Doctors, hospitals, systems. God or fate. The person who died. Myself. Family who grieve differently or showed up wrong. Friends who vanished. People who still have their person. Everyone and no one — the short fuse at the whole world.

The anger I am most ashamed of — allowed here, in full:

If my anger could say one sentence and be fully heard, the sentence would be:

What my anger might be standing guard in front of:

An honest map is how the anger starts to change jobs — from a guard blocking the door to a guide showing you where the grief is.

Letting Anger Move

Energy needs motion, not a target

Grief-anger lives in the body — jaw, fists, chest, the urge to slam something. It needs to *move*, and it does not need a victim to move through. The aim is discharge that leaves you emptier, not rehearsal that winds you tighter.

Ways to let it move

Check the ones you would actually do — then do one while the anger is up, not after it fades.

- ☐ Walk hard or run — fast enough that the body takes over
- ☐ Push against a wall for thirty seconds, then release everything
- ☐ Clench both fists tight, hold, release slowly — three rounds
- ☐ Physical work: scrub, dig, chop vegetables, haul, clean
- ☐ Loud music, and let the body move how it wants
- ☐ Say it out loud, alone — a parked car is a soundproof booth (parked is the whole trick)
- ☐ Write it unfiltered, then decide later what happens to the page
- ☐ Cold water on the face or wrists (*skip this one if you have a heart condition*)

What tends to backfire

- **Aiming it at people.** Discharge near the anger's address always feels justified in the moment. It is the move that adds new grief on top of the old.
- **Rehearsing it on repeat.** Replaying the rage script — the speech to the doctor, the takedown of the sibling — feels like venting but works like practice. If a method leaves you more wound up, it is rehearsal. Choose motion instead.
- **Driving angry. Drinking on top of it.** Both take the one thing anger already narrows — judgement — and narrow it further.

When it spills anyway

It will, sometimes, on the people nearest you. The repair is short and honest: "*That was not about you. I am grieving and it came out sideways. I am sorry.*" Repair quickly and often. Grieving households run on repair.

My two most likely moves, chosen now for the next surge:

If the anger keeps frightening you or the people around you, or ever turns toward harming yourself or anyone else — bring in a professional, and if there are thoughts of self-harm, call or text 988 (Canada and the US), 24/7. Anger this size deserves company, not white knuckles.

The Unsent Letter

Everything you never got to say

Ground rule: this is one of the deepest pages in the pack. Pick a moment with some quiet on the far side of it — not the ten minutes before work. If it stirs up more than it settles: eyes open, feet on the floor, five things you can see, pen down. The letter will keep, and it can be written across many sittings.

Death interrupts conversations. The apology, the thank-you, the argument that never resolved, the ordinary news they keep not being here to hear. An unsent letter is a place to finish your side. Everything is allowed in it: love, fury, blame, jokes, the unfair parts, the things you would never say at a funeral. Nobody will read it. It does not have to be balanced. It only has to be true.

If they hurt you, or the relationship was complicated: grief for a hard person often arrives mixed with relief, and the mix can feel monstrous. It is not. Both parts are allowed in the letter — grief for what they were, and grief for what they never became.

If they died by suicide: the letter may fill with questions no one can answer. Write the questions anyway — they deserve a page even if answers never come. And if writing to them stirs thoughts of joining them, put the pen down and call or text 988 (Canada and the US), 24/7. That is not failing the letter.

Openings, if the page feels too blank

- What I never said to you is...
- What I am angry about — and I am allowed to be — is...
- What I want to thank you for is...
- What I want you to know about me now is...

Dear

(Continue on any paper. This page is just the door.)

Afterwards

The letter is yours. Keep it somewhere private. Read it at the grave or the water's edge. Tear it up slowly. Tuck it into their book. Write another one next month — many people find the letters change over time, and the change is the point.

The conversation did not end. It changed form. This page is what your side of it looks like now.

Grief in Doses: The Grief Window

An appointment you open — and close

Grief held off all day, every day, does not evaporate. It waits, and it ambushes. A grief window turns some of the ambush into an appointment: a chosen time, in a chosen place, where you open the door to it on purpose — and then close the door with a practiced exit. You are not scheduling your love. You are giving it protected time, the way anything important gets protected time.

Grieving on purpose has a quiet side effect: you walk the road out of a wave enough times that your feet learn it. The fear of drowning tends to shrink once you have swum to the edge and climbed out, repeatedly, by choice.

Build your window

My time and place (twenty to thirty minutes, somewhere private — same time each day or a few times a week):

My door in — what opens the grief gently (their photos, their song, the letter, a memory box, speaking to them):

My door out — my closing steps, done in order, every time:

A closing that works for many people: put the objects back in their place, wash your face or hands, step outside or to a window for one minute, name five things you can see, then do one ordinary task — kettle, dishes, a short message to someone. The sameness is what makes it a door.

Someone who knows I am doing this (they don't have to be present — just aware):

Three honest cautions

- **If a window turns from heavy to dangerous mid-visit** — if what comes up stops feeling like grief and starts feeling like thoughts of harming yourself or of not wanting to be here — close the door early (eyes open, feet on the floor, name five things you can see) and call or text 988 (Canada and the US), 24/7. That is not a failed window; that is the door working.
- **If the window will not close** — if it regularly spills into hours and flattens the rest of the day — shorten the dose, move it earlier in the day, or bring in company: a person nearby for afterwards, or a grief professional to do the deeper visits with. A window that will not close is not failure; it is a sign the load needs more hands.
- **If the window stays empty** — you sit down and nothing comes — that is fine. Numbness keeps its own calendar. Keep the appointment anyway; being willing is the whole job some weeks.

You are allowed to say to your grief: not now — I will meet you at seven. Grief has a way of accepting the appointment, once it learns you keep them.

Riding the Wave

For the moments that ambush you

A song in the supermarket. A form that asks for their name. Their handwriting on a jar label. A wave can arrive anywhere, at full height, with no warning. This page is the drill for those moments — small enough to remember mid-wave. (If you are driving when one hits, pull over first. Waves and traffic do not mix.)

The drill

- 1. **Name it.** Silently: *this is a wave, not an emergency*. It feels like an emergency. It is a wave.
- 2. **Plant.** Both feet on the floor. One slow breath out, longer than the breath in.
- 3. **Let it crest.** Do not fight the water — fighting is what exhausts. Tears in public are allowed; ducking to a washroom or the car for a private minute is also allowed. Waves crest and ease. Yours always have.
- 4. **Come back slowly.** Drink some water. One kind sentence to yourself — *of course that hit; I loved them*. Return to the day at half speed for ten minutes.

The evidence log

The fear says a wave will never end. Your own record is the answer the fear actually believes. After each big wave, one line:

Date	What set it off	Size (1-10)	How long it really lasted	What helped

What I am learning about my waves — how they start, how they end, what they leave behind:

You have a perfect record of surviving your own waves — every single one so far. This page just gets the record on paper, where the fear can read it. One exception is not a wave: if it arrives with thoughts of harming yourself or of not wanting to be here, do not ride that one alone — call or text 988 (Canada and the US), free and confidential, 24/7.

Your Culture's Mourning Rules

Keep, adapt, set down

Nothing here asks you to grade your culture, your faith, or your family. Traditions carry hard-won wisdom about loss — and they have always been adapted by the people carrying them. Choosing how you mourn is not abandoning your people.

You inherited mourning rules — from family, faith, community, and the country you live in now. Some are spoken ("we wear black for the year"), most are not ("we don't mention the dead at dinner," "men leave the room to cry"). Rules you have never named run you the hardest. This page names them, then sorts them.

The rule, spoken or unspoken	Where it comes from	Handrail, weight, or both

Sort what you carry

KEEP — a rule or ritual that genuinely holds me, the one I would keep even if nobody was watching:

ADAPT — a rule whose meaning I want, in a form that fits my life here: smaller, private, translated:

SET DOWN — a rule that pinches more than it holds, set down for now. (Not thrown away — you can pick it back up in a different season.)

If the pinch runs the other way

Sometimes the misfit is not your tradition — it is a workplace or a country with no room for anyone's mourning: three days of leave and a quiet expectation that you will be fine by Friday. If your tradition's way is right for you and the world rushes you, the misfit is not in you.

One sentence for the rushing world (for example: "In my family we mourn for forty days. I am in the middle of something that has a shape."):

You can honour where you come from and still grieve in your own key. Living traditions bend — that is how they lasted long enough to reach you.

Rituals Within Reach

When the traditional one is out of reach

Some mourners are separated from the rituals that were supposed to carry them: the funeral happened on another continent, or during a lockdown, or without you — because you were estranged, or because the relationship you had was never given a seat: a partner the family would not acknowledge, an ex, a friend who was family in everything but name. The grave is a flight away. The tradition needs forty people and a building, and you have a small apartment in a country where nobody knew them. Missing the ritual is its own loss — real, and worth grieving. But ritual itself is not out of reach, because ritual was always made of small parts: **a set time, a set act, a meaning you assign, and — if you want one — a witness.** Every tradition you have ever seen was once someone's new ritual.

Small acts that carry meaning

Ideas, not assignments — cross out and add freely:

- Light a candle at the same hour they are remembered back home
- Cook their dish; set their place; eat it in their honour
- Visit water, a hill, a tree — a stand-in place that is yours and theirs now
- Play their song on the date that matters; speak to their photo
- Give something in their name — money, food, time, blood
- Plant something that will need you
- Video-call into the gathering you cannot attend, and hold your own small version where you are

My ritual — time, act, meaning, witness (if any):

The firsts

The first birthday, the first holiday, the anniversary of the death: firsts land hard, and they land harder unplanned. A plan is not morbid — it is a handrail you build in advance.

The first that is coming	What I want to do	Who I want with me	My fallback if it is too much

A ritual is not less real for being small, private, or invented this year. Meaning is not measured in attendance.

Grieving Around Other People

Scripts for the clumsy, the kind, and the exhausting

Grief comes with a social job nobody warns you about: managing other people's responses to it. The friend who vanishes. The acquaintance who says "everything happens for a reason." The relative grading your grief against the family rules. Most of it is love without vocabulary — people are frightened of loss and fumble near it. Understanding that costs you nothing. Managing it still takes energy you barely have, so this page scripts the recurring scenes once, in advance.

"How are you?" — three honest depths

You owe nobody the deep answer. Pick by person and day:

- **Surface, for the hallway:** "Getting through. Thanks for asking."
- **Honest-short, for real colleagues:** "Up and down. Today is a down day, but I am okay to work."
- **Honest-full, for your people:** "Actually hard. The anger is the loudest part right now. Can I just talk for a bit without you fixing it?"

For the comments that land wrong

"At least she lived a long life." "He is in a better place." "You're so strong." "Time heals." You do not have to educate anyone, and you also do not have to swallow it. Exit lines that keep the peace and your dignity:

- "People say that — it does not reach where I am, but I know you mean it kindly."
- "I am not strong, I am grieving. But thank you for being here."
- Or simply: "Mm." — and change the subject. Politeness does not require agreement.

Asking for what actually helps

People take their cue from you far more than you would think — most are waiting to be told the job.

What actually helps me (be specific enough to say out loud — 'bring food without asking what kind,' 'say her name, I love hearing it,' 'talk to me about normal things'):

What I need people to stop doing — and the sentence I will use: ('I would rather not talk about how he died.' 'Please do not ask if I am over it.')

The person I can be fully unedited with:

Telling people what helps is not demanding. It is handing them the job they have been quietly begging for.

The If-Onlys

Guilt, hindsight, and the fairness test

Ground rule: deep water. If this page stirs up more than it settles — eyes open, feet on the floor, five things you can see, page down. It will keep.

If only I had called that morning. Insisted on the doctor. Been there. Not said what I said. Noticed sooner. Griever after griever runs this loop, because hindsight plays a cruel trick: it shows you the ending and then re-grades every earlier choice as if you had seen it coming. Almost always, you did not have the information then that you have now. Luck, timing, and other people's choices got recast as your fault — because fault, strangely, feels better than helplessness. If it was your fault, the world is at least controllable. Guilt is often the price the mind pays to avoid meeting the truth that some things could not be controlled at all.

Guilt can be doing one more quiet job: it can feel like the last duty — as if punishing yourself is a way of staying loyal, and setting the guilt down would mean they stopped mattering. It would not. There are better ways to stay connected, and the next page is full of them.

And if part of your guilt holds something real — a choice you would truly make differently — the aim is still not a life sentence. Real responsibility deserves proportion, honest repair where repair exists, and company; carrying it alone forever is not what they would assign you, and untying exactly this knot is work grief therapists know well.

The fairness test

My loudest if-only, written out in full:

What I actually knew at the time — not what I know now:

If my closest friend carried this exact sentence about their person, what would I say to them?

A truer sentence to carry instead — as kind as it is honest:

If the death came with stigma or silence around it — suicide, overdose, a death people avoid naming — the if-onlys can be relentless, and the questions may never fully close. Grievers carrying this deserve specialist company: grief therapists and survivor support groups know this exact terrain, and sitting among people who carry the same questions changes their weight.

You are judging yesterday's choices with today's information. That is not justice — it is hindsight wearing a judge's robe. You get to step out of that courtroom.

Staying Connected

You don't have to let go — you have to carry differently

An old idea about grief says the work is to detach — to "let go," reach "closure," and move on. If that has always felt wrong to you, trust that instinct. For many people the relationship does not end at death; it changes form. The love keeps living — in memory, in habits, in values, in the conversations you still have with them in your head. Grief work is not subtraction. It is learning how to bring them with you into a life that keeps going. That is also this pack's deepest answer to the fear of drowning: grief feels bottomless when it seems like pure loss. It gets more carryable when some of it turns back into relationship.

Ways people carry their person forward

Ideas, not assignments:

- Say their name in conversation; let new people meet them through your stories
- Keep the recipe, the phrase, the Sunday habit — and know it is theirs while you do it
- Ask their advice in your head, and notice you often know what they would say
- Carry a value they modelled, on purpose, and let people see it
- Wear the watch. Use the good dishes. Objects do their best work in use, not behind glass
- Mark their dates — with others or alone, festively or quietly, their way or yours

One gentle note: if keeping everything exactly as they left it is starting to feel like a museum you are the guard of, that is worth bringing to your window, your letter, or a professional — carrying and being unable to move are different weights.

What of them already lives in me — habits, phrases, values, tastes:

What I want to carry forward deliberately, starting now:

What they would want carried — and what they would tell me to put down:

The love did not die. Your task was never to get over them — it is to learn how to bring them with you.

When Grief Needs Company

Help is part of grieving, not a failure of it

Mourning traditions the world over gather people around a loss — that is what funerals, wakes, shivas, vigils, and forty-day observances *are*. If you are grieving with less company than that, wanting help is not weakness — it is reaching for the company that mourning rituals exist to provide.

Kinds of company

- **A grief group.** Ordinary people carrying losses, talking. Hospices and community organizations often run them free or nearly free, including online, and many mourners are surprised by how much lighter the room makes the load. Groups exist for specific losses too — for partners, for parents, for suicide loss.
- **Grief-specific therapy.** A trained companion for exactly this terrain — including the angry version, the terrified-of-drowning version, and the between-cultures version. You do not need a diagnosis at the door. One sentence is enough to start: *"Someone I love died, I am angrier than I expected, and I am scared of the size of this."*
- **Your own people, given jobs.** The scripts page turns vague goodwill into actual help.
- **A doctor,** if sleep, appetite, or your body's basics have been off for a sustained stretch — grief is physical, and support for the body is support for the grief.

When it is more than grief

Grief and depression can overlap, and telling them apart can genuinely require a professional. Reach out — to a doctor, a therapist, or both — if a long time has passed and any of these still holds most days:

- The grief is as acute as the first weeks, and life cannot restart around it
- Numbness that never thaws, or hopelessness that has stopped lifting
- Alcohol or other substances have quietly become the main way through the day
- Feeling worthless, or that everything is somehow your fault
- Thoughts of harming yourself or of not wanting to be here — **this one is not a someday conversation: call or text 988 (Canada and the US), free and confidential, 24/7, today**

None of these mean you have failed at grieving. They mean the load outgrew the hands carrying it — and more hands exist.

The kind of company my grief could use — and one step toward it this week:

Grief shared is not grief doubled. It is the one load that lightens by being seen.

14-Day Gentle Tracker

One honest line a day

Grief distorts time and memory — a month blurs, and the fear says "it is not getting better" with total confidence, no records consulted. One line a day builds the record. Not a report card: waves and anger are not failures here, just weather worth logging. Print a fresh copy whenever fourteen days run out.

Day	Biggest wave today (1-10, or none)	Where the anger pointed, if it came	One kind thing I did for myself	One contact — a person, a ritual, a memory
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				

Looking back over the fourteen lines — one thing the record shows that the fear would have denied:

The goal is not smaller numbers. The goal is a true record — because grief measured honestly is grief you can work with.

Weekly Reflection

Ten minutes, once a week

A week of grief holds more than it seems — waves ridden, anger carried, small mercies, moments of the life that continues. Once a week, count what actually happened, because uncounted weeks get filed by the fear as "no better," even when they held real ground. Print a fresh copy each week and date the corner.

Week of:

The hardest moment this week — and how I got through it (I did get through it):

Where the anger showed up, and what it might have been carrying:

A memory of them that surfaced — hard or sweet or both:

Something I did that belongs to the life that continues — work, a meal cooked, a laugh, an errand, rest:

A rule, ritual, or person that helped this week — or pinched:

One gentle intention for next week — a dose, a ritual, a conversation, a rest:

A week with one wave survived, one honest moment of missing them, and one meal eaten at a table is not a lost week. That is grieving, done.

Pocket Grief Cards

Cut them out. Keep them where the waves find you.

Six reminders at wallet size, for the moments the big pages are out of reach. Wallet, phone case, car visor, desk drawer, coat pocket — anywhere the supermarket wave or the 2 a.m. anger tends to find you.

<i>"This is a wave, not an emergency. Feet on the floor. Let it crest. It ends — mine always have. (Thoughts of not wanting to be here are different — call or text 988.)"</i>	<i>"The anger is grief with an address. Underneath it, most days, is love — roaring."</i>
<i>"I am allowed to grieve in doses. A break from grief is part of grieving, not a betrayal of it."</i>	<i>"Being angry at someone I love — even at them — does not mean I loved them less."</i>
<i>"I can honour where I come from and still grieve in my own key. Living traditions bend."</i>	<i>"I do not have to get over them. I am learning to bring them with me."</i>

Cut along the dashed lines.

Please Read: Important Information

About this toolkit

This toolkit is an educational self-help resource. It draws on widely used grief-support ideas and practices — including wave and dose-based approaches to mourning, expressive writing, and ritual- and values-based ways of staying connected to the person who died — presented for personal reflection.

This toolkit is not psychotherapy, counselling, medical care, or mental health treatment, and it cannot diagnose or treat any condition. Using it does not create a therapist-client or any other professional relationship with its creator. It is not a substitute for assessment, diagnosis, or treatment by a qualified physician, psychologist, psychotherapist, counsellor, or other qualified professional.

A note on pace and safety: grief is heavy material, and several pages here go near its deepest parts — anger, guilt, and the moments around the death itself. Please work in doses, and if any page stirs up more than it settles, stop (eyes open, feet on the floor, name five things you can see) and set it aside. Grief and depression can overlap: if numbness, hopelessness, or grief as acute as the first weeks persists long-term and life cannot restart around it, please talk to your doctor or a mental health professional — that is not failing at grief, and effective help exists. Nothing in this toolkit is a reason to face any of this alone.

If you need help now

If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call 911 (Canada and the US) or go to your nearest emergency department.

988 Suicide Crisis Helpline (Canada) / Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (United States)

- **Call 988** — free, confidential, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **Text 988** — if you prefer texting to talking

Additional support:

- **United States — Crisis Text Line:** text HOME to 741741 (24/7)
- **Canada — Kids Help Phone (for young people):** call 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868 (24/7)

You do not need to be in crisis to reach out. If you are struggling, these services are there for you.

However your grief looks today — the tears, the tasks, the anger, the numbness — it is yours, it makes sense, and you do not have to carry it alone.

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