

Adult Grief Booklet

+ *10 Day Reflection Guide*



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Introduction

Be proud of yourself for taking a step to see how you can move forward your healing journey. This booklet was created to reach MORE people where they are...at their own pace, in hopes of healing and growing.

Grief is not something to get over, or something that needs fixing, but with the right tools it can make your healing journey healthier and more meaningful.

At Hope's House we noticed a common theme of adults putting all their time and effort into getting the kids any help they need, but they were putting their own needs on the back burner. This can result in delayed grief healing. In a national study done by the National Alliance for Grieving Children, 20% of the families polled had a parent that was not getting grief help for themselves. This resulted in kids having:

1. Higher levels of anxiety.
2. Some behavior issues acting out in the home
3. Lower self-esteem.

This is why it is important to take time to take care of yourself and to work on your own grief journey.

These booklets are published monthly to keep grief healing at the top of mind. This includes new articles and content each month, as well as a NEW 10 Reflection guide every month. I hope you find value in these booklets, and would love your feedback. If you would like to look back at past months booklets visit www.hopeshousewi.com for a free download.

If you are having a tough time this holiday season look back at our November booklet. There is a section on grief and the holidays.

What you can expect from this booklet:

Real talk from people who have gone through a tough loss.

No SHOULDs (you should do this...)

Sending healing thoughts your way,

Gina Peotter

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The Best You

We are coming up on the new year, goal setting, and usually the largest fitness month. No pressure, right?! Let's take a moment to do some daydreaming. If you could snap your fingers and be the healthiest, happiest version of you... would that look like?

Body:

What would your body feel like when you move? _____
Physically, what would your body look like? _____

Mind:

What types of thoughts would be going through your head? _____
How would you greet people? _____
How would you react in tough situations? _____

Daily Life:

What is your demeanor like? _____
Are you rushing around or calm? _____
What does the cleanliness of your house/car look like? _____

Relationships:

What would be different in your relationships/home life if you were the best version of you?

How would your happiness affect others around you? _____

Activity:

What activities would you be doing to fill your time? _____
Is there something you could do now that you couldn't before being happier and healthier?

New You:

Is there someone you know who exudes this new image of yourself? _____
If no, can you paint this new picture of you in your head? _____

Take some time to reflect on the above before moving on... feel free to draw a symbol or photo below of the best version of yourself.

Ok, now that we have this beaming, healthy image of the new you in your head. The NEW you is going to meet the current you. Yup, go with me for a moment... What were your initial hesitations or nervous thoughts...

- Y N Would it be how you treat your body? (Exercise or lack of, water intake)
- Y N What types of things are you consuming? (Food, drinks, media)
- Y N Is there concern on how you treat others, especially when you are stressed?
- Y N Overall mental wellness and how you talk to yourself? (Anxiety, depression, anger, self-loathing/guilt/shame...)

This is not meant to make a person feel bad, but to open your eyes that a healthier you isn't just about joining a gym.... wellness can mean so many things.

We have seen so many adults put their health and wellness to the side after the death of someone. Then they read something, snap at a person out of anger (and don't recognize themselves) or are unhappy with the mirror, and poof it's been 10 years and they wonder how they got to the current person they are.

Your current mental health could affect your physical health down the road. Grief is tough! It can be hard, but we want you to see that there can be improvements. By working on you... your mind, body or soul... YOU can improve so many areas of your life, and others around you.

If you were to improve your current mental health to 1% happier what would that look like? What about 10% Happier?

Small improvements are possible! Being aware that there is room for improvement is step 1- so congrats you took a step and didn't even know it.

ACTION ITEM: What can you do this week to work on being 1% healthier, in your mind, body our soul? Once you start seeing your "normal" behaviors or actions- use that as a trigger to ask yourself "What would the best version of me do in this situation?"



Forgetting

We often hear kids say they are worried about forgetting the person or pet who died. That seems to be a big fear, and we have heard adults say it too. As we move forward with our lives it is natural to get caught up in our everyday hustle and bustle.

As time goes on sometimes that voice is harder to think of, or the things they did are not as clear in our memories. But, if you were deeply saddened by their death... chances are they left a lasting impression on your heart. We encourage kids to talk to others about memories they had of their loved one. Chances are adults in the family's memories can be fun to share and kids can adopt them as their memories too.

With infant and young child loss deaths people sometimes have the fear of forgetting them because they did not have any many memories or time with the child. It still can be a great learning experience to talk to others who knew the child to see what memories they had of the days, weeks, months and years or even of the pregnancy... you may find there were moments you didn't know about.

More ideas:

1. Create a scrapbook, photo book, or even a digital album of the person.
2. Make a pillow, quilt or bear out of their clothes. There are local companies and larger ones that do this.
 - a. Thepatchworkbear.com
 - b. Tammybears.com
3. Get a pillow made of a great picture of the person or pet. (Kids love the pet pillows, it's like they can still cuddle with them). There are companies that make these, but you can also get it done on Amazon.
4. Ask a friend or family member to look at old photos with you. You might be surprised if some of their memories you didn't know about.
5. Create a wish list... a list of things you wish you could have done with the person... as you do those things in your life, carry a symbol or memory item with you, so they are close to your heart during those times.

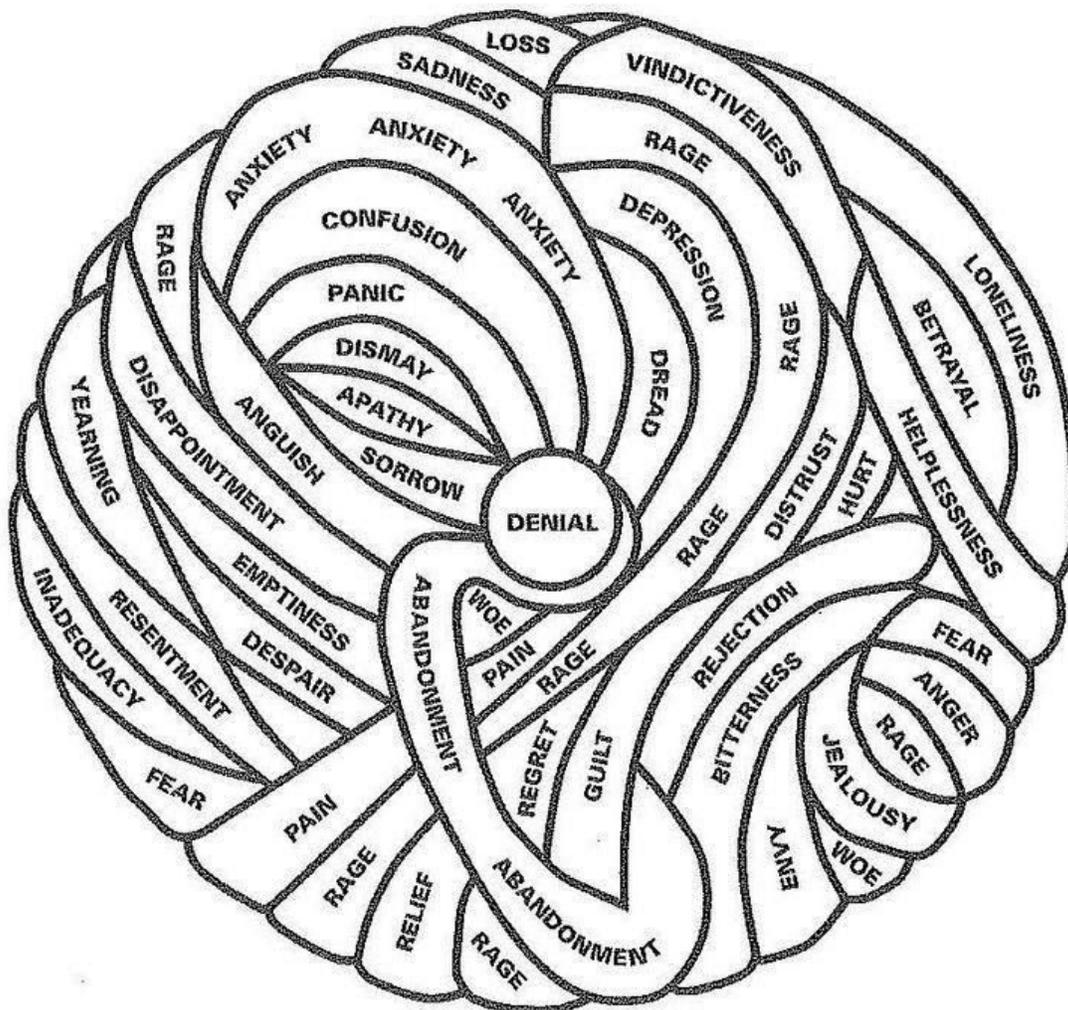
ACTION ITEM: These ideas might sound great, but what are you ACTUALLY going to do? This week post a memory/old photo on social media, listen to their favorite music, read their favorite book, or look back through some old photographs... lean into the memories.



Emotions

Take some time to color in (yes with markers, highlighters, pens, colored pencils or crayons... or paint) on the emotions you are feeling today. Put a star by the ones that are the most intense, and a question mark by the ones you don't know what to do with.

BALL OF GRIEF A TANGLED "BALL" OF EMOTIONS



Talking To Kids About Death

If you are uncomfortable talking about death to children you can do this through books. Visit the Hope's House website for kids and teens book recommendations. A fantastic new book called, "The Boy and The Gorilla" and is really great to talk directly about common questions on death. Watching a Disney movie can also trigger a conversation about the death of a loved one.

If you are afraid to have these conversations, you can seek out professionals to sit down with your kids and you to explain death, or have them work through how you can have this conversation.

A way to get a little more comfortable having these talks is by educating yourself on language to use that may help. Kids are direct. Using direct explanations instead of metaphors can help. Some key explanations are listed below.

Death: is when a person's body stops working.

Suicide: is when a person makes thier own body stop working.

Homicide: is when another person makes a person's body stop working.

Grief: is the emotional response to a loss.

Trauma: is the emotional/physical response to a terrible event.

Continuing bonds: is a fancy way to talk about having a relationship with the person who died after death.

A simple way to make sure kids are going in a positive direction with grief is to follow the 3C's- Connect, Communicate and Continue Bonds.

Find a way for them to connect with someone (or themselves) with feelings and emotions.

Communicate 1 on 1 with their feelings through journaling or another way... or with groups of others going through a loss.

Continue Bonds with the person who died and keep a relationship or memories alive.

ACTION ITEM: Take a step... reach out to a librarian asking for book recommendations, search for a counselor, find a grief group to join, watch a video on talking to kids about grief. If you don't have kids in your life, take a step... purposely have a conversation this week with someone about death and why it is a taboo topic for most people, or share see out a new way of communicating about your emotions to a person or to yourself... writing a letter and ripping it up is always a therapeutic activity.

10 Day Reflection Guide- New Death

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *"It takes a year, nephew... a full turn of the calendar, to get over losing someone."*

- Annie Proulx, *The Shipping News*

It would be comforting to know exactly how long the grieving process takes. Everyone you talk to has his/her own advice, and books on the subject have differing opinions as well. The truth is that it is different for everyone.

Don't feel pressured by the calendar. Your grieving period will take as long as it takes, and you cannot actively control that. Be good to yourself and work through this time with a sense of patience rather than urgency. By taking steps into leaning into your feelings, it can help you work through grief in a healthier way.

👉Q: What have you heard about how long it takes to “get over” a loss? How would you feel if you were still struggling at that point out in your life? Pretty crappy, right?! What can you do to remind yourself it takes time?

Day 2: *"If he didn't love so deeply, he couldn't grieve so deeply. But he's drowning in it." - Dee Henderson, The Protector*

Think about how someone you know seemed when he or she was grieving. How did you feel being around that person? While it's tough to see yourself objectively, try to determine how you may be connecting with those around you. Think back to all the people who reached out or came to the funeral... a piece of that person's heart was reaching out to you showing that they cared. On those tough days or moments try to remember all that love wrapped around you.

One of the kids books I was just reading talked about how it is important to lean on family and friends in tough times. You don't have to face this alone. Yes, the grieving journey is yours to heal though, but leaning on those around you can help make it a bit easier.

👉Q: When was the last time you let someone help you? Make it a point to tell someone you are having a tough time with XYZ this week, or reach out to someone who said “let me know if you need anything”. Letting someone help you can be a way to let some of the control go and lean into the care.

Day 3: *"Grief ... gives life a permanently provisional feeling. It doesn't seem worth starting anything. I can't settle down. I yawn, I fidget, I smoke too much. Up till this I always had too*

little time. Now there is nothing but time. Almost pure time, empty successiveness." - C.S. Lewis, A Grief Observed

You may be all over the place with emotions and what to do, or what not to do. Losing someone stinks! To put it in a simple way. Nobody taught you how to deal with this. It is foreign for most people. Reach out to someone who has resources, Hope's House, a counseling center, your funeral home... all places have many resources that can aid you in healing.

Some suggestions of things to help with time are to begin a project that is meaningful to you... You may want to label old photos or videos, donate clothing to a charity, or reorganize your bedroom. Take on a task that generates a tangible result, so that, upon its completion, you can look at it and see what you have achieved.

👉Q: What is the real reason you have not reached out for help? Is it a sense of guilt, fear of breaking down, the sound of talking out emotions sounds like too much to handle?

Day 4: *"I do hope that when the day comes, whether in 1, 10, or 100 years, I don't want you to think of me and feel sad." - Esther Earl, This Star Won't Go Out: The Life and Words of Esther Grace Earl*

Do something special - be it lunch with a friend or a walk in the park with a relative - and take a photograph of it. You can start to build some new memories centered on what you are doing today.

👉Q: What would the person who died say about how you are doing if they were sitting right next to you?

Day 5: *"We bereaved are not alone. We belong to the largest company in all the world--the company of those who have known suffering." - Helen Keller, We Bereaved*

There will be times when you mourn the person you were before you experienced the loss of a loved one. Death can change a person.

👉Q: What deep down do you wish would have been different? Either with the day they died, at the funeral or shortly after? -- After you answer that question, ponder what really is at the root--do you have guilt for not being there, do you wish you would have done something differently--remorse...

Day 6: *"Take any emotion - love for a woman, or grief for a loved one, or what I'm going through, fear and pain from a deadly illness. If you hold back on the emotions - if you don't allow yourself to go all the way through them - you can never get to being detached, you're too busy being afraid. You're afraid of the pain, you're afraid of the grief. You're afraid of the vulnerability that loving entails. "But by throwing yourself into these emotions, by allowing yourself to dive in, all the way, over your head even, you experience them fully and completely. You know what pain is. You know what love is. You know what grief is. And only then can you say, 'All right. I have experienced that emotion. I recognize that emotion. Now I need to detach from that emotion for a moment!'" - Mitch Albom, Tuesdays with Morrie*

As you experience the grief process, try to have an awareness of how you are feeling and how those who share your pain are feeling. It helps to have self awareness so that you can eventually use this time to grow and become a more thoughtful, empathetic person.

👉Q: What have you noticed in yourself or what have you learned since the death:

1. Do you cling to others to fill down time?
2. Do you shove emotions down so you don't cry in front of people?
3. Do you have a drink to unwind and not deal with the sad feelings?
4. Do you look forward to time with family and friends?
5. Do you seek out ways to help others?
6. Do you find yourself looking for grief groups, books, or resources?

If you answered yes to any of the last three it sounds like you are taking positive steps. If not, maybe there is something you can do this week to take a baby step in a healthy/healing direction.

Day 7: *"Tears have always been easier to shed than explain." - Marty Rubin*

Sometimes it feels like there are no words to accurately describe what grief feels like. As with any pain, you can't remember it with precision after the fact, which can be a blessing.

👉Q: What metaphors do you use to describe grief? Rollercoaster, waves of the ocean, strings being cut and repaired, a ripped heart...

Day 8: *"Here's what I know: death abducts the dying, but grief steals from those left behind." - Katherine Owen, Seeing Julia*

When you have experienced a loss, you can feel like a victim. Something precious was taken away from you, and there is a definite helplessness to that. You need to make the active decision to not be a victim of your grief. Feel the sadness, but work through the pain proactively each day to take back control of your life.

👉Q: How do you do that? -- Sounds great, but REALLY what can you do? Do you:

Journal, punch a pillow/kickboxing, axe throwing, hit some balls (golf/baseball/soccer), scream into a pillow, take time to cry, talk to others about what you are going through, watch movies that make you cry, sing super loud and let the tears come out, play music to get your feelings out, do nothing and just move on with your day... How are any of those helping you? If not, how are you going to lean into your feelings RIGHT NOW?

Day 9: *"Life Lesson 3: You can't rush grief. It has its own timetable. All you can do is make sure there are lots of soft places around -- beds, pillows, arms, laps."*

- Patti Davis, Two Cats and the Woman They Own: or Lessons I Learned from My Cats

Show yourself the same patience that you show to everyone else in your life. The key is to believe that you will heal from this. You will be changed, but you will heal nonetheless.

👉Q: What thing in your life are you being hard on yourself for? What things in your life do you put your own high standards or expectations on? What in your life do you make harder for yourself?... What in your life can you put on pause or get help with for a little while?

Day 10: *"Grief lasts longer than sympathy, which is one of the tragedies of the grieving."* - Elizabeth McCracken

You probably haven't received a sympathy card in quite a while. Most of your friends, family, neighbors and coworkers already know about your loss, and have reached out to you. You may be feeling fairly isolated and forgotten.

While you can't force people to reach out to you again, it can be helpful to reach out to someone else who needs you. Offer to run an errand for a busy parent, pick up groceries for an elderly neighbor, or send a card to someone who could use the pick-me-up that comes from being remembered. The process of acting to help another person will make you feel more alive and connected.

After people kept saying "I'm sorry for your loss", it seemed like the world moved on, but I didn't and I felt offended that nobody had sympathy anymore. It can be an odd feeling of wanting that sympathy, but not wanting attention on you. It might hurt when the world moves on and doesn't acknowledge your super huge pain.

👉Q: What else are you grieving? There is a phrase called "secondary loss". Meaning beyond the surface of the death of your loved one, what else are you grieving the loss of? A childhood home, the role of being a parent, the role of caregiver, the loss of a second income, the loss of seeing a child grow up... It can be important to take a step back and see that you really are going through a lot more than it might seem, but know that you can get through it in a healthy way and there can be hope for happier times.



10 Days of Reflection- 1 Year+

This section is intended for anyone over the year mark after a death. Not saying there is a time limit on grief, but most lives look a bit different days after a death vs a year or more out.

You can use these anyway you would like. Read them all at once and ponder the questions. Or you can take a few minutes each day to go through one. Another idea would be to read them together with someone else, and share your thoughts. These can also be used as journaling prompts, get out a journal, notebook, paper or computer and write out your thoughts... see where they may take you. This is designed to work anyway you want it to. The goal is to be true to yourself.

Day 1: *“I often used to say ‘I am fine thank you’, when people asked me how I was... their response would just be to say ‘great’ and we all moved. What I longed for them to say was ‘I know you aren’t fine, but one day you will be’. To just know my pain was acknowledged and my aching heart was being heard would have meant the world. This is the gift we can all give to anyone who is walking the path of grief... listen to their whispers and breathe life into aching souls”. -Zoe Clark-Coates*

I love this so much! Thinking through the actual pain you felt versus what you said when people asked how you were.

👉Q: Have you noticed anyone who has gone through a loss respond with “I’m good” or responding to “good” when people ask how they are... but in all reality you know they are not fine... What can you do next time you see this? (send them a text that you would love to spend some time catching up soon, call them and ask if they want to talk, send them some flowers saying you are thinking of them...)

Day 2: *“Anyone who has lost a loved one knows that you don’t recover. Instead, you learn to incorporate their absence and memories into your life and channel your emotional energy towards others, and eventually, your grief will walk beside you instead of consuming you”. Rashida Rowe*

Woah! I’m not sure if you are too this point or not, but that is a neat way to look at it- your grief will walk beside you and not consume you. Think back to when it consumed you. Maybe you couldn’t function a full day without breaking down or living like a zombie unable to comprehend what really happened. I am super happy for you if you are past that and are able to get through the days in a more manageable way. Most understand that grief never will really go away- which is neat because that means there was some love there or connection to another soul that has changed you.

👉Q: When you think of grief do you think of it as negative or positive? If your instinct is negative, what positives can you write down in the margins? (there was love there, you became more self-aware and compassionate...)

Day 3: *“Isn’t it funny how day by day nothing changes but when you look back everything is different”*. -C.S. Lewis

I always like to go back to this quote. When you go through the motions of the day and work to get through it or to make it to the next weekend, it can be tough to step back and see how much things have changed.

👉Q: If you took a look back 10 years, how much has your life changed with income, health, relationships... what about 15 or 20 years...

Day 4: *“If there’s even a slight chance at getting something that will make you happy, risk it. Life’s too short, and happiness is too rare”*. -A.R. Lucas

👉Q: What are some things you used to enjoy doing? Think back to when you had extra free time, or back in college, high school, middle school or even when you were a lot younger.

Day 5: *“May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears”*. -Nelson Mandela

Woah! Most parents urge their children to make good choices, but what advice do you have for yourself on your choices in life.

👉Q: Are you hiding because of fear of failure, fear of looking foolish, fear of being too emotional, fear of speaking in front of people, fear of rejection? What if the choices you made all worked out in your favor or better- try making a choice reflecting your hopes this week.

Day 6: *“Self care is giving the world the best of you. Instead of what’s left of you”*. -Katie Reed

Many people think self care is bubble baths and massages. By all means tell anyone you need to that is what you need to do (wink, wink). If you are functioning on “getting by” that also means others around you are getting the tired, exhausted, short fuzed you... if you took time to wind down, destress, go fishing, go hunting, read a book, take a long overdue nap, (put the phone away and stop scrolling social media), and worked on slowing down and being present... you might enjoy yourself a bit more, and those around you would get a better version of you as well.

👉Q: What does YOUR self care look like to you?

Day 7: *“Be the things you loved most about the people who are gone”*.

This is one of my favorites. It is so stinking neat to think about. I loved my dad’s humor/goofiness, (and a ton of other things), and loved my mom’s passion to help others and give back (among a ton of other things)... I work to keep humor in my life, smile/laugh and bring humor to tough situations. I also have this strong pull to help others because I saw how much my mom loved giving back and how much of an impact that made.

👉Q: What are all the things you loved about the people who are gone. (write all over this page, or get out a new sheet of paper).

Day 8: *“Books give me an escape from reality, even if it's only for a few minutes”. -Just Keep Smiling*

I've always been a person who felt like they needed to learn more, or hear another side of a story to look at it from all angles. Non-fiction books about people's lives or things they have learned throughout life that made them a better person were my jam... and still are. But every once in a great while I turn to a funny fiction book or book on cd to listen to in the car. I've noticed that I smile more, goof around a bit more, and overall feel happier.

👉Q: Do you have anything that you enjoy that you don't do that often that lifts your mood up a bit?

Day 9: *“Time passes but not one day goes by that you are not here in my heart. The day you died was not just a date on a calendar, it was the day when my very existence changed forever”.*

It wasn't a moment in time, but a date and life after. Sometimes people say they look at life as the before and after the death. There is the quote called “The Dash” that is pretty neat. Take time to look it up online or ask someone if they have heard of it.

👉Q: What do you want people to remember about you during your “dash”... the middle part between your birthdate and death date? What legacy do you want to leave behind.

Day 10: *“I'm still grieving, I'm still upset. And that's okay”.*

You do you... every person is different, every relationship is different, every death is different, every person's response and grieving journey is different. Maybe you feel like you are in a good spot or maybe you feel stuck and don't know which way to turn. You are on a journey and nobody is going to go through a death the same way you do... but that also means you are in charge of making steps to move forward in your grief journey.

👉Q: Fill in the blank: I'm still _____ and that's okay. This month I plan to _____ to help lean into my feelings.



**YOU'RE STRONG.
YOU SURVIVED LIVING
THROUGH THE MAIN PAIN
OF IT ALL.
YOU WILL SURVIVE THE
HEALING TIME.
THINGS WILL GET BETTER.**

Wellbeingsidekick.com

Sources

Muehl-Boettcher Funeral home daily emails. You can sign up for those on their website www.muehlboettcher.com

Gina Peotter. Grief Support Specialist, Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home, Executive Director of Hope's House, November 24- December 4, 2020.

Hope's House- grief support for kids and families email us at info@hopeshousewi.com or connect with us on Facebook.

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