



Adult Grief Booklet

+ *10 Day Reflection Guide*

March 2021

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Introduction

I'm proud of you 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. It is not something that needs fixing, but with the right tools it can make your healing journey healthier and more meaningful.

These booklets are written to help explain that you are not alone in your grief journey, and hope to provide some information and action items for healing.

"A recent study, done before this pandemic by Amerispeak and WebMD, found that 57% of Americans are grieving the loss of someone close to them over the last three years. That means every other person you see is grieving — because grief never really goes away."

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, and 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 for 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.

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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Grounding

If you are not familiar with the term grounding, it can mean a few different things. Some people say grounding is the act of being in the moment, and taking time to regulate yourself to be in the now. Others use the term grounding as the technique of grounding your feet into the earth and connecting with nature. Either way can sound very woo woo to some people, but that is probably because our culture teaches us to be on the go and to be busy. How often do you see commercials for taking a minute to slow down- other than the commercials for the 'Calm' app? (Which is great by the way.)

When I say 'busy', what is the first word that comes to your mind? That word is what you associate being busy with. If it was 'anxiety', that is probably what you feel when you are too busy. If it was 'success', that is probably why you feel the need to be busy and feel guilty slowing down or taking time for yourself. Take some time to think about how you feel about being busy.

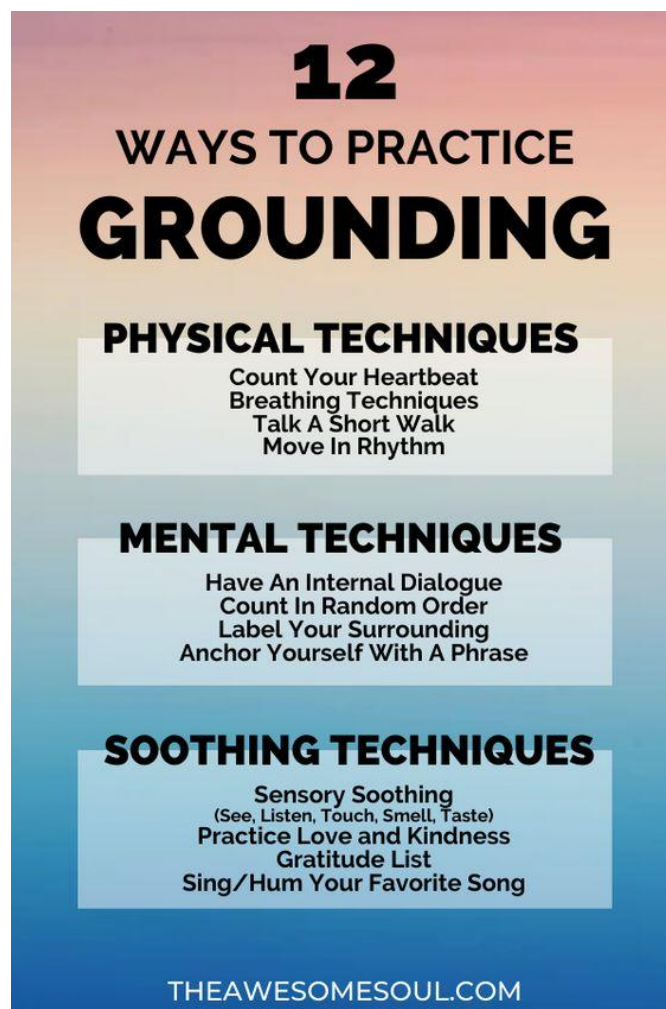
Most people are not hard wired to take a break and turn inward. If this is new to you, you are among most of the population. Below is an easy grounding technique used with kids in a school setting- that teens and adults could also benefit from. It is also used to help with anxiety to bring a person to the present and not the frantic future. It is called the 5-4-3-2-1 method*. This is designed to interrupt your thought process and focus on things around you.



Below are some other ideas you can try to help bring yourself away from worry or to just take a break. Try a few, try them all... maybe there is something that resonates with you best that can help you or a child.

“The Doorway Technique” is a fancy way of removing yourself from the current moment if you are wrapped up in thought, and walk through a doorway to take a break. Some people put their walking shoes on and take a walk to clear their head. Others use it to escape to the bathroom to take a few deep breaths. The idea behind it is leaving your situation and physically going into a new location, and using the doorway as your release.

[Read more](#) in an article about 12 grounding techniques to relieve anxiety and panic attacks.



*This is not clinical advice. If you suffer from anxiety and panic attacks please consult your doctor. These are techniques that have helped myself and kids I work with.

how to Self-Soothe

breathe consciously;
try a breathing exercise

try a guided
meditation app

let yourself
cry if you feel
it coming

wrap yourself in
layers of blankets

drink something
warm

take a warm
shower or a long
bath

visualize a calm place
or a happy memory

doodle fluid, abstract
shapes & patterns

put on your
most comfortable
clothes

starting upwards,
relax your body from
head to toe

do a few deep breaths,
and visualize the anxious
energy leaving your body
through your mouth

close your eyes
for a while

give yourself a
hand massage

wrap your arms around
your body and give yourself
a twenty second-hug

stand up and
shake your body
for a minute

focus on just one
thing: a noise,
smell, or sensation
around you

place your hands on your
chest, and feel your heart
beating. that is the sound
of you surviving. you will be okay!

lay down and
stretch out your
body

@crazyheadcomics

Gratitude

Gratitude helps people feel more positive emotions, relish good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships. People feel and express gratitude in multiple ways. -Harvard Health

This is one of my favorite topics, mainly because I have seen the magic behind it. You might be wondering why an adult grief booklet would be talking about being grateful when my favorite person just died, or I'm still hurting so much over the loss. This section is meant for you to take a step back from focusing on death and to dig deep to find gratitude in your life. You might have to dig, and that is ok. There are books out there that can help you walk through a practice. There is a book I read and went through the exercises twice now that really helped me realize how much in my life I should be grateful for. The book is called "[The Magic](#)" by Rhonda Byrne. It is a 28 day journey of journaling and activities centered around gratitude.

I notice in my life when I focus on gratitude things shift for me mentally in a good way. There are [guided gratitude journals](#) out there as well that can help you through thinking about gratitude prompts. Most are designed for about five minutes a day to help you keep up the habit of writing. Or some people just grab their computer or a notebook and write out 5 things a day they are grateful for... after about day 3 you might start really reaching and searching deep for things to be grateful for. It is a pretty neat practice because when was the last time you felt truly grateful for your legs, but if later today you were in a cast up to your hip because you broke your leg... you would be so stinking grateful the day you get that cast off and can walk again and shower by yourself again.

"The benefits of practicing gratitude are nearly endless. People who regularly practice gratitude by taking time to notice and reflect upon the things they're thankful for experience more positive emotions, feel more alive, sleep better, express more compassion and kindness, and even have stronger immune systems." [Read More](#) about the science behind gratitude. Another article by Berkley on how the [practice of gratitude changes your brain](#).

Here are a few more ideas on how to practice gratitude daily:

- Gratitude journaling
- Gratitude board (visual pictures of what you are grateful for)
- Gratitude jar (write on a piece of paper what you are grateful for)
- Gratitude meditation (apps out there or YouTube videos)

A good structure for writing out gratitude is to say what you are grateful for... think about if you did not have that in your life, what that would feel like... write down why you are grateful for that “thing” and really think about it, then say thank you with lots of appreciation. By doing this small exercise it causes you to think about the why, and really show appreciation to the thing you are grateful for. It might look something like this:

I am grateful for _____ because _____
thank you, thank you, thank you!

I am so extremely grateful for _____ because _____
thank you, thank you, thank you!

I and truly blessed to have _____ in my life, because _____
thank you, thank you, thank you!

I hold gratitude for _____ because _____
thank you, thank you, thank you!

I appreciate _____ in my life, because _____
if it was not in my life, my life would be different in the following ways:

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Action Item: Commit to five days of something around gratitude. This could be anything listed above or an idea you have. Reflect back on if your mood or anything is different after these few days.

Guided Journaling Questions

Take some time to really be honest with yourself. If you need to type out the answers and delete them so nobody sees. Or you can write it on a piece of paper and rip it into lots of pieces or even (safely) burn the paper. The goal is to not just put down some thoughts, but to be raw and real with yourself about these answers.

1. If you could label your life right now with a theme what would it be called and why?

2. Do you feel your circumstances are shaping your life or just a piece of your life?

3. List three people you lean on most and what you lean on them for?

4. I struggle with _____.

5. I am good at _____ and _____.

6. After the death I had a hard time with _____.

7. After the death I have come a long way and learned _____.

8. This year I would like to focus on healing myself by _____.

9. An action item I am going to ACTUALLY do this week is _____.

10. I wish other people understood _____.

Get more journal prompts in past Adult Grief Books free to download at

www.hopeshousewi.com/resources

Journal Questions or Talking Points for Kids

These questions can be used to start conversations with kids to dig deeper. Or they can be given to kids as journal prompts to use as their guided journal.

1. When you don't want to talk about feelings what do you do instead?
2. What makes you feel the happiest?
3. What are three things you are proud of today?
4. What made you mad this week?
5. When was the last time someone did something nice for you?
6. What is the best compliment you ever received?
7. Name three qualities that you are proud of.
8. My favorite time of year is _____ because _____.
9. The best thing about this week is _____.
10. I have a tough time with _____.
11. The last time I saw the person who died, I _____.
12. The best vacation would be _____.
13. The last time I cried was _____.
14. What is your favorite game to play?
15. What is your favorite thing to do on a rainy day?
16. If I'm sad, I _____.
17. If I feel like I want to talk about my problems I _____.
18. Who are two people you feel the most safe with?
19. What is one thing you miss about being younger?
20. What did you love most about the person who died?

March Book Suggestions

Adult Grief Books

“**Comfort: A Journey Through Grief**” by Ann Hood is a novel about a lady who lived through the death of her young daughter and where she found comfort.

“**Anxiety the Missing Stage of Grief**” by Claire Bidwell Smith is a great book for anyone who has some form of anxiety after the death of a loved one. It takes a different way of looking at anxiety and your grief journey. There are quizzes, assessments, explanations of different grief theories and models, mental health and healthy suggestions to move through life and anxiety.

Adult Self Regulation Books

“**Yoga For Grief Relief**” by Antonio Sausys is a neat book about grief and how it sits in our brains and body. The book goes on to explain how something like practicing yoga can help with physical symptoms of grief, as well a person's mental state. There are photos to explain easy breathing techniques and stretches.

Kids Self Regulation Book

“**Is Nothing Something? Kids’ questions and zen answers about life, death, family, friendship, and everything in between**” by Thich Nhat Hanh is a super fun book for kids (and adults). It covers a lot of topics and has a great way to answer truthfully. It’s great for kids to read on their own or for adults to help with answering questions for kids.

Kids Grief Books

“**Boats For Papa**” by Jessixa Bagley is a cute book about a boy who makes boats and writes a note to send out to sea for his dad who died. It is a cute book. Honestly the first few times I read it I breezed through it and didn’t think I liked it. Once I finally sat down to read it, I did actually like it a lot. Take some time to sit down and read this one, I got teary at the end.

“**My Big Dumb Invisible Dragon**” by Angie Lucas is starting to be one of my top favorite grief books for kids. This was actually recommended in the February booklet, but I’m carrying it through this month as well. If you don’t look for any other grief book this month try reading this one. It is about a child whose mom died and this big dragon keeps following him around.

“**Rosie & Crayon**” by Deborah Marcero is a book about pet loss, but has a great overall grief and hope message. It’s super neat how the author talks about the world in colors before and after the death, then what life is like later in life when she finds some hope.

Action Item: Seek out some sort of grief or self development medium today- rent a book from the library, buy one online, look up a podcast to listen to, watch a documentary...take an action in your healing or education this week.

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: *"One small crack does not mean that you are broken, it means that you were put to the test and you didn't fall apart". -Linda Pointexter*

You might have a crack or a hundred in your heart, but that doesn't mean you are completely broken. Those cracks show that you didn't fall apart, and maybe you are mending them together as the days go on or as you work through your grief. That ache is proof that you are living through it each day.

👉Q: What is the biggest source of your strength? What gets you through the tough times?

Day 2: *"Be not afraid of growing slowly, be afraid only of standing still". -Chinese Proverb*

What would it feel like to look back on today- five years from now and realize you are stuck in the same mindset and never felt any better than today? If you are struggling right now that would be pretty discouraging to look back five years and realized you lived your life in the same pain for FIVE years! That is the reality for some people, they stand still for years and don't even know it. They don't work on getting better or try to improve themselves and heal.

👉Q: Take a step back from your life... how would you truthfully describe your current situation (mental health, physical health, grief journey...)

Day 3: *"Stop holding on to what hurts, and start making room for what feels good". -Unknown*

This one is great for many reasons to me. To some people it can sound selfish, especially if your loss is really recent. Why should I feel joy when there is a massive hole in my life and the world? And to others there might be a huge sense of guilt surrounding that statement- why do I deserve to be happy? People might think I'm not actually sad. Life is short, and you know this first hand. If there are moments when you can let some joy into your life give it a whirl. You are worth some joy after a large amount of sadness.

👉Q: What could you do for 5-10 minutes today that would bring your some joy?

Day 4: *"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see". -Henry David Throeu*

The same two people can watch a storm and one person might think about how beautiful the rain is on the water... the other person might be terrified and worrisome about winds. It is how you choose to look at things that reflects on your outlook and attitude. Take some time today to purposely look at nature and be in awe of the beauty of the creation around you.

👉Q: What was something amazing you saw in nature today?

Day 5: *“All you need is one safe anchor to keep you grounded when the rest of your life spins out of control”. -Katie Kacvinsky*

Thinking through the grounding section of this booklet, is there anything from that section or anything that you do to keep yourself grounded? If you have one person, one form of healing, one form of coping, one form of grounding you can start there.

👉Q: What is one way you are coping that is unhealthy?

Day 6: *“Community is about sharing my life about allowing chaos of another’s circumstances to infringe on mine; about permitting myself to be known without constraint; about resigning myself to needing others”. -Sandy Oshiro Rosen*

Think about sharing your life with others. This might be something therapeutic if you have been closing yourself off to the world after death. This can be done in online groups- either a grief group or some type of hobby you enjoy, or even an in person grief group or meetup. If you don’t feel comfortable sharing your life with people you don’t know, think of your inner community- friends and family that you have been closing off. Start by writing a letter, you don’t have to share this if you don’t want to. Or even a phone call.

👉Q: Who can you connect with this week?

Day 7: *“The weird, weird thing about devastating loss is that life actually goes on. When you’re faced with a tragedy, a loss so huge that you have no idea how you can live through it, somehow, the world keeps turning, the seconds keep ticking”. - James Patterson*

I’ve used this quote a bunch of times and it rings true to me everytime. I think back to the death of my dad and I couldn’t understand how people were at work or kids in school when there was a massive hole in this world and my heart. Your world stops, but everyone else keeps going. You just went through such deep pain and the checkout lady that I bought my funeral dress from has no stinking clue!

👉Q: What was the most shocking thing to you after the death of your person?

Day 8: *“When you arise in the morning, think of what precious privilege it is to be alive- to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love”. -Marcus Aurelius*

You might know this more than some people- life can be taken away from you in an instant and tomorrow is not guaranteed. This goes back to the gratitude section of this booklet- take some time to think about what you really are grateful for. Nearly 150,000 people die in the world each day...

👉Q: What can you do today or tomorrow to show gratitude for your life?

Day 9: *“Start before you are ready”. -Steven Pressfield*

This can be so truthful for so many things, but in relation to healing and grief this seems so spot on. Nobody wants to walk down that hospital hallway to identify their loved one... nobody

wants to actually see their wife in a casket... nobody wants to pick out burial clothes for their child... nobody wants to step up to a counter and purchase a grief book to read... nobody wants to tell a story about how their dad died.

What all those people have in common is they did it- they took a step, whether it was out of obligation, force, the way things had to happen, AND they took a step in their healing if they know it or not. Sometimes that's where people stop taking steps, the obligatory funeral is done and I don't have to deal with this any more. I will stuff my feelings down, avoid crying, and life will go on... what some do not understand is others are taking steps going to grief groups or working on their tough stuff by talking to others, journaling, calling a counselor... and are step by step moving forward. AND most of those people took a step before they were ready.

👉Q: What could you do this week to take a step before you are ready?

Day 10: *"In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety". -Abraham Maslow*

This goes back to day nine. By not taking a step forward you might be sitting in the safe zone. And sometimes in life that might serve you a purpose, like right after a death, trauma or a transitional season in your life. Take time to think about what season of your life you are in right now.

👉Q: What if you took a step forward? What concerns do you have, and what would things look like if it helped you feel better?

**"The wound is not my fault.
But the healing is my
responsibility."**

— Marianne Williamson

sasforwomen.com

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: *“Strength is what we gain from the madness we survive”. -Unknown*

You are strong because of what you have gone through in life. Please don't think any differently. We all struggle at some point in our lives and especially after the death of someone, it can knock us down... hard! But your battle scars show you stood up when you got knocked down. Maybe you are only half way up, but you were strong enough to start standing. Be proud of that.

👉Q: What events in your life have made you a stronger or more compassionate person?

Day 2: *“My story is filled with broken pieces, terrible choices and ugly truths. It's also filled with a major comeback, peace in my soul and a grace that saved my life.” -Sunday Morning With Sandy*

Broken crayons still color my friend. Just because a piece of you is broken that doesn't mean you can't still move forward and heal. The word BROKEN means not functioning properly, or torn and fractured (dictionary.com). That sounds about right when you think about the moments after you found out a person died, right? For some it might have been relief, but how did your heart feel that they were not on this earth anymore?

👉Q: How would you describe what it felt like when you heard your person died?

Day 3: *“What you want to show yourself is that you can control the direction of your thoughts”.*
-Abraham Hicks

Your feelings determine your reality. Read that one again... your feelings determine your reality. Powerful stuff friends. I've talked about this in the past how two people can watch a store and have very different perspectives on if it is frightening or beautiful.

👉Q: Think back at what negative thoughts or comments you have said today (or this week). How would you rephrase them to have a positive spin?

Day 4: *“You are strong enough to handle whatever’s coming, even if it doesn’t feel like it right now”. -Tiny Buddha*

Does that sound realistic to you, or like a quote that is blowing smoke? You were strong enough to get through the day your person died... you are strong enough to be here today. I always said if I could walk down that aisle at the church to see my dad dead in a casket when I was 22, I could do anything. That thought has got me through a lot of tough stuff in my life.

👉Q: What tough things have you seen people close in your life get through? (Think about reaching out to them and telling them how proud you are of them for going through it. You might be surprised to hear what they say)

Day 5: *“Imagine This: If you had \$86,400 in your account and someone stole \$10 from you, would you be upset and throw all of the remaining \$86,390 away in hopes of getting back at the person who took your \$10? Or move on and live? Right, move on and live. See, we have 86,400 seconds each day. Don’t let someone’s negative 10 seconds ruin the remaining 86,390. Don’t sweat the small stuff, life is bigger than that’. -Tiny Buddha*

Woah! That is super powerful to think about. For me I’m my own worst enemy, that person who took \$10 or more is usually myself. I tend to be hard on myself and a lot of negative talk at times, I need to remind myself that it’s just a negative way to look at something, and the rest of my day does not need to throw away the rest of the money. This makes me think of the quote “It’s a bad day, not a bad life”. Sometimes we can get into a funk and don’t realize we are letting it consume our day, week or even our year- yes I’m quoting the show Friends here :)

👉Q: Can you think back to someone (or maybe yourself) who triggered you to throw away the remaining \$86,390?

Day 6: *“Grief is a powerful source of information about who we are, when we dare to look”. -Antonio Sausys*

This one really made me think. What has grief caused you to do or react in certain ways? Were you angry at others for no reason, or maybe had problems crying after the death...did you turn to a cocktail when you were stressed or didn’t want to deal with what was going on inside? Did you shut others out or really cling to someone? All rhetorical questions, but take some time to think about who you are as a result of your grief.

👉Q: How would you describe your: Reactions, Actions, And Inactions after the death?

Day 7: *“We identify ourselves through the persons and things we are attached to; when we lose them, we lose part of who we are”. -Antonio Sausys*

Did you lose an identity when the person died? Maybe you lost something like a sense of companionship, or your kids father figure... there are so many layers to death.

👉Q: What part of you also died with your loved one?

Day 8: *“Don’t be discouraged because things aren’t happening as fast as you’d like. All seasons serve a purpose”.* -Live Oola

Some people might not agree with this quote. If you don’t I’d encourage you to think about why and the reason behind it. (I’m not saying anything is wrong with not agreeing to the statement) What I have found for people who do not agree is because they feel they are a victim in their current “season”.

Think through some tough times in your life from the past, and write out or talk to another person about what positive thing came out of that tough experience.

👉Q: What positive things came out of some tough times in your life?

Day 9: *“The highest tribute to the dead is not grief, but gratitude”.* -Thornton Wilder

This one is a challenge to you- get out a piece of paper, your phone, talk to text, computer... anything to actually write this out.

👉Q: What 25 things are you grateful for, for the person who died? If you are ready to REALLY stretch yourself write 25 more. (Could be traits they had, wisdom they gave you, lessons you learned, times you spent together...)

Day 10: *“Don’t try to silence your grief... if you do, what started as a purr can quickly become a roar”* -Zoe Clark-Coates

I’m tough I don’t cry, feelings are dumb, nobody is going to tell me how to go through steps of grief since they haven’t lived my life... those are all things I thought after my dad died. So I pushed grieve to the wayside and didn’t deal with it. Well that came back to bite me in the butt in many ways. It wasn’t until five years later when my mom died that I realized I was shoving it all down. I wouldn’t even watch a movie that I thought might be sad because I didn’t want to cry. Some people develop bad coping strategies by doing this, some push off the healing journey years or even decades. I’ve heard people say their loved one was gone 20 or 30 years and they just now realize they haven’t really dealt with the death yet. It’s ok, you can take a step at any time.

👉Q: Do you honestly think you have been taking steps to work through the death? If not, why?

when I feel...

I need to...

exhausted



**disconnect and take
some time to reassess
my priorities**

self doubt



**remember what
makes me unique, my
qualities and my
achievements**

lonely



**call a friend, go for a
walk or write in my
journal**

anxious



**take a moment to
breathe and ground
myself**

@vertellis

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, February 12- February 16, 2021.

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

What's Your Grief- website filled with grief articles and topics for the bereaved.
www.whatsyourgrief.com

This booklet is sponsored by Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home. To learn more about their quality service and family owned business visit the website www.muehlboettcher.com or find them on Facebook. They are located at 358 South Main Street in Seymour, WI 54165 and can be reached at 920-833-2328



About the Booklets

Find more booklets at the Hope's House website www.hopeshousewi.com. These are written every month by Gina Peotter, the Executive Director of Hope's House and the Grief Support Specialist at Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home.

About the Author

Gina is a Seymour native, she graduated from Seymour High School in 2003. She then went on to complete her Bachelor's Degree from UW-Stout and Master's Degree from Concordia University-St. Paul. She also holds her Grief Support Specialist Certification from UW-Madison.

Gina and some peers started a non-profit in 2018 called Hope's House in the Greater Green Bay area that focuses on free grief support for kids ages 4-18 and their families, and is currently the Executive Director. Gina has written and published a grief book called, ["It's Ok Not To Cry"](#) based on her own life story, and the story of others who have gone through a tough death. She currently writes and publishes a free Adult Grief booklet and Reflection Guide each month available at the Funeral Home or an electronic version on the Hope's House website.

After going through the death of her parents when she was in her 20's, and numerous other friends and family members she started on a path to helping others find hope in dark times. Gina is the Grief Support Specialist at Muehl-Boettcher Funeral Home and is available to the families they serve, to help find the right resources to help navigate life after the death of a loved one.

Gina loves helping others any way she can. She was awarded the WPS Volunteer of the Year Award in Leadership in 2020 for her work with Hope's House. She also is a volunteer at Camp HOPE- camp for grieving children in the Stevens Point area. She volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club- Fox Valley Center for Grieving Children for a number of years, was a Hospice volunteer through Aurora, and a meal prep volunteer at numerous homeless shelters in the area.

"The greatest good is what we do for one another". -Mother Teresa

Find More Grief Resources

Website: www.hopeshousewi.com/resources