

Planning for the Anniversary of a Death



There are points in the grief journey where the road gets a little more difficult, where you feel more emotional, or you just feel lost. One of these points can be the anniversary of your loved one's death. As the date approaches, your body may alert you to what is coming even before you realize the date's significance. It is common to feel sad or weepy as the anniversary approaches, no matter how long it has been since the death. Although you may recognize what is going on, your child may be experiencing the same things without realizing the cause. Here are some tips for working together with your child to acknowledge the anniversary of the death.

- **Be honest with your child. Set an example for expressing feelings.** Talk about the person who died and your grief. Kids may avoid talking about the deceased or bottle up their emotions because they do not want to make you, or other people, sad or uncomfortable. Seeing and hearing you express your feelings may help your child do the same.
- **Write a letter to the person that died.** Share things that have happened in your life over the past year. Let your loved one know how you are feeling and how you are dealing with your grief.
- **Have a gathering.** The funeral and memorial services that happen immediately after a death are often a mournful time. Take time to get together with friends and family to celebrate the life of the person who died. Focus on the happy memories. This gathering could also be a time of solace, and if it is a solemn occasion, it can remind you that you are not alone.
- **Do something that your loved one liked to do.** Go to a favorite park, watch their favorite movie, or eat at their favorite restaurant. Planning something in advance can make the day more manageable. Preparing for the day may help you manage your emotions over time, rather than being bombarded on the anniversary day.
- **Create a memory box and fill it with mementos from both before and after the death.** Sharing about these items can help you and your child remember that, no matter how hard it has been, life goes on after a loved one dies. Write letters, poems, songs, or stories, or draw a picture for the deceased to put in the box with the other mementos.
- **Be easy on yourself.** Do whatever feels natural for you. There are no rules to grieving.
- **Remember, everyone grieves in their own way.** An anniversary may be easier to observe some years than others. Do not try to put a timeline on your grief or set expectations for your children based on how you are doing. Grief is a journey, and everyone will take their own path.

Further Reading:

- *Not Just Another Day* by Missy Lowery Throckmorton
- *A Decembered Grief* by Harold Ivan Smith

References:

- Brenner, K. (2012, October 9). How To Acknowledge Their Death-versary. Retrieved June 29, 2015, from <http://www.hellogrief.org/how-to-acknowledge-their-death-versary/>



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- Dealing with the Anniversary of a Loved One's Death. (2013, October 28). Retrieved June 29, 2015, from <http://www.whatsyourgrief.com/dealing-with-the-anniversary-of-a-loved-ones-death/>
- O'Dell, C. (2008, June 23). How Should You Celebrate the Anniversary of a Loved One's Passing? Retrieved June 8, 2015, from <https://caroldodell.wordpress.com/2008/06/23/how-should-you-celebrate-the-anniversary-of-a-loved-ones-passing/>



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