

Ways to Remember Our Loved Ones

Each year, each cycle, we can choose a path of healing—in some small way we can begin to remember with sweetness and peace instead of turmoil and panic.

- ❖ At holidays, birthdays, summer cookouts, or anniversaries find a way to symbolically recognize the presence of the loved one. Use a particular utensil when cooking; display a special item that belonged to the deceased; light a candle in home and/or in church; display something the person made or painted; make a toast in which the person is mentioned by name or hang a particular ornament or object that characterizes the loved one.
- ❖ Do something to carry on the charitable interest your loved one had in a particular organization or cause. It could be things like the preservation of some part of the environment, the sponsorship of a child in an orphanage, helping the homeless, or volunteering at a soup kitchen. You may also want to consider establishing a scholarship at a high school or college.
- ❖ Play your loved one's favorite song or a song from his/her favorite entertainer or television show. It can also be useful to find music that was popular earlier in your life that can bring up old memories of you and the loved one.
- ❖ On an anniversary or other special day, ask your best friend to take a trip to a favorite spot that you used to go to with your loved one. While there discuss the past and the memories this visit evokes. When you are further along with reinvesting in life, you may wish to make this trip by yourself, and choose to talk to your deceased loved one about the good times you had there.
- ❖ Make a collage of pictures of the loved one that can be framed and placed in your home and/or office. If you possess a specific artistic talent (or you could hire someone) draw cartoons or symbols that illustrate the interests, character, or skills of the person and include them in the collage. Include a sample of the deceased's work, if appropriate.
- ❖ Have a plaque made with your loved one's name engraved on it with a favorite saying (yours or one your loved one liked). Inquire at your local college or university, if he/she was associated with it, if they would accept a donation of a bench for the campus with your loved one's name on it. Or purchase a bench and place it in your garden area or at a cemetery garden.
- ❖ When the time is right (and only you will know when) tell your favorite story about the loved one. It could be a funny story or one that illustrates his/her character. Pick the right place and persons to share the best with, and be alert to inject it as a normal and natural extension of the conversation.
- ❖ Periodically, use a favorite recipe that your loved one liked to eat or cook. You could also serve his/her favorite dessert with a reminder of what the conversation was like when it was served.
- ❖ Plant a memory garden or a tree, bush, or flowers that bloom each year and are referred to as "Sarah's Garden," "Mary's tree" or Joe's plant." Choose items that were the favorites of your loved one. If possible, put them in a space so that when you look out your window they can be seen and you can comment on their growth or looks during the year.

- ❖ Use your loved one's first name each day. You can do this by choosing to talk to him/her each day, either silently or out loud, or you can tell others that you hope they will feel free to use the name and talk about the loved one when referring to them would be natural in a particular conversation.
- ❖ Assemble a get-together with family and friends on the anniversary of your loved one's passing. The best support is from those closest to you and who also loved the deceased. You can have dinner and sit down to share memories of your loved one. Put on a home video featuring the departed if you have one. Watching it may bring out the tears, but you will find a warm smile coming to your face as well.
- ❖ Light a candle for your deceased loved ones on the anniversary of their deaths. This is a quiet, respectful way to remember the people you cherished in life. If there are children around who question the use of the candle, be sure to explain it to them in a calm, loving manner.
- ❖ If possible, make a trip to the cemetery to visit your loved one's grave site. Bring a bouquet of beautiful flowers to leave on the grave. Stand by the site and talk to your loved one in your head or even out loud. It can bring a lot of comfort to verbalize how you feel about her, even if she is no longer physically present.
- ❖ Write a heartfelt letter to your loved one. When you are hurting, it can be extremely therapeutic to write a letter to someone. It doesn't matter if the letter only stays with you because it is still a healthy outlet.
- ❖ Run a memorial piece in the obituary section of your local newspaper. This can include a photo and loving words from friends or family, or simple a poem that reminds you of him.
- ❖ Ask the minister at your local church to ask for prayers for your loved one, at the service that falls on the day of the anniversary.
- ❖ Hold a fundraiser, such as a bake sale or car wash, in memory of the deceased person. Include signs and literature at the event that pay tribute to your loved one. Donate all the funds raised to a cause that was special to him -- or to his memorial fund, if applicable.
- ❖ Create a memory box. Craft stores sell wood boxes with glass lids. Collect Dad's baseball cap, ticket stubs, signed baseball, a photograph of the two of you at the game and create a memory you'll always cherish.
- ❖ Release balloons in your loved ones favorite place. Write a note or message, tie it to the string, and release it into the heavens.