

Suggested Activities to Encourage Healing

Make a Memory Book: Get a photo album with plastic press-down pages, or a scrapbook, and fill it with pictures, poems, and things that stir memories of your loved one. I made each of my daughters a memory book for Christmas, and I added those things that were special to each of them. Possibly some of these items will stir your thinking to be creative in making your own book...

I used items such as: an old TX Drivers license, his Malibu Racing license, some cards where he had kept his score while golfing, letters he'd saved that they wrote to him when he was stationed in Germany, his dog-tags, a computer scanned, color copy of all his Military awards, birthday cards, and some notebook paper for them to add more poetry and write their favorite memories of him. I also encouraged them to write down all the little things that made him "Robby" such as his dimples, his favorite sayings, his awesome taste in ties, or silly things he would do or say.

On those days that my girls missed Rob most I would find them curled up with their memory books, often hugging them and crying. It was healing for them then, and they are now precious treasures.

Memory Box - Fill a box with special things that belonged to the loved one. The container itself could possibly even be something that has some significance or will trigger a memory. Make it a family project, or let each person make his/her own memory box. This is something that can be added to throughout the years whenever you find things that remind you of that loved one.

Picture Books: Young children may need to "talk" by drawing pictures of how they feel. These pictures can be saved in a notebook or a large photo album and the child can look at them whenever they need to process more of what they are feeling. This also opens the door for you to discuss how they feel when they tell you about their picture. Please allow them to have times when they draw but don't want to discuss it with you. In time they will, but don't force it. Remember, this is a way to work toward the healing, not something more to pressure them.

Journaling: This is something that works for anyone old enough to write. Get a spiral notebook and write a daily account of what you are feeling. This is one time that I would strongly urge parents to allow teens and pre-teens to have complete privacy so they will be real in what feelings they can write about. If they know you 'need' to read it, they won't be honest with themselves and work through all their feelings.

Example: Sometimes kids will say things such as, "I hate (deceased)!" What they really hate is how it has changed their life and the pain everyone is left with. But they have to sort through it and come to where they recognize that.

In time they will. Parents reading this 'I hate them' statement may feel horrified and over react if they don't understand that the child wasn't meaning it the way they read it. When a parent reacts in a way that the child's feelings are challenged or 'corrected', the child will 'shut down.'

Venting: *Get an empty chair and pretend the deceased is sitting there. Tell the deceased all those things you are feeling. When a person vents they need to allow all feelings, good and bad, and be honest in your 'conversation' with them. Writing letters to the deceased is also a good way to release feelings or find closure.*

Collections: *Many people collect things that remind them of their loved one, such as unicorns, angels, golf items, ballerina shoes, etc.*

Memory Huggies: *Take a shirt or another item that belonged to the deceased and sew the bottom together. Sew the arms in a criss-cross across the front of it. Then stuff the shirt and sew the neckline shut. This makes a personal huggy that can bring much comfort, and can also be used as a pillow. There are also places you can go online to have Teddy Bears, etc made from loved ones clothes. I have links to one on our website.*

Craft Collage: *Something a member did with her daughter, leading up to the first anniversary: "I got a ton of second hand magazines and we cut out everything we could find that reminded us of her in any way. We didn't analyze, we just let our hearts lead us. Then we separately pasted all of our treasures on to a collage to memorialize our expressions of love. It provided some release and I do treasure the results. It took a little emotional pressure off both of us and got us through another hump."*

Email Them: *Set up an email address for (deceased), and email him/her when you have a bad day or when you feel like you wish you could have told them something. You will have the password to this account so no one else will see it unless you decide to allow them to.*

Leave a journal: *at the gravesite so that the ones that visit may write a note to the deceased or the family.*

If you come up with new creative ideas, email me and I will add it to this list. The more suggestions we have, the more we can offer to new survivors. I am also looking for ideas to help with the holidays, such as making a "Robby Tree" (See Tender Days Suggestions). Email me at louise@road2healing.com