

Appendix 1

Casserole Killer: A Practical Guide to Empowering the First Few

Weeks and Months of Your Grief Journey or the Grief Journey
of Someone You Know

If There's Anything I Can Do

Get used to it. That's what everyone is going to say, and then they will deposit a very kind casserole. The truth is that food is great, but your fridge ends up bulging with carbs.

People generally don't know what to do when a family is grieving. So, here's your cheat sheet. I've compiled lists of things that generally need to happen in the first days, first week, first few weeks, and first months.

The real deal is that you have a limited amount of time to harness all that community goodwill and direct it in a systematic, productive manner. Generally speaking, the attention to your grief has a shelf life in your community of about seven to ten days. Years ago, families used to wear black for a year as a sign of grief, and it would remind the community to support a grieving family.

Today, we have the internet. Take these lists and let them be a kickstarter to inspire what you and your loved ones will need after loss.

Truthfully, if you are the person experiencing loss, try to get someone else to take charge of all this. People don't want to sit around and be sad. Give them jobs. They will feel productive, and it will make life easier for a grieving family in the long run.

To empower this grief process, you have to get people to commit to a schedule, like on SignupGenius.com. Make a list of their talents and see where they can plug in for the future. "Tax accountant...great! Thanks for the casserole. Can we make an appointment to see you in two months as a grief gift for X? That would be a really big help." You get the idea. Who's going to say no? Your grieving family will get some much-needed help from your community.

People want to help; they just don't know how. The grief scene is messy. You need someone, like a family member or best buddy, to have clarity and control while a grieving family is in the shock of loss. It's all going to clear in about ten days, and like anesthesia, all that commotion in the home will die down and the remaining family will feel the loss in a million unexpected forms. That's when the consistent contact is needed most. That's when you will appreciate the steady stream of people coming to help. I suggest it's needed for a solid six months.

I've said that grief is transformative, but not just for those who have directly lost a loved one or are experiencing other forms of grief. Grief is like the "all skate" session at the roller rink. For those who support the grieving, grief can be transformative, too. It will make you stronger, more empathetic, and less afraid of the messiness of life.

So, grab a clipboard and a computer and let's get this party started. Remember, keep your sense of humor; it's going to be a long road. I give you permission to kindly be in other people's faces, to be forward and ask for help. Go forth, coordinate, and steer this grief ship in a positive direction.

The Grief Cheat Sheet

First Week Top Ten List

1. Stabilize your blood sugar

Make sure you have good, nutritious food to eat.

Green smoothies, green juices, green powder supplements, salads, healthy snacks, and balanced meals. These foods help normalize blood sugar and prevent the high and low blood sugar spikes that can contribute to chemical depression. Try not to eat only simple carbs. Focus on complex carbs and good proteins.

I take GABA and 5HTP supplements, which have been known to calm the brain, help induce sleep, and activate the pleasure centers of the brain without the side effects of alcohol or simple sugars. Of course, check first with your health practitioner before changing your diet or taking supplements.

Minimize alcohol consumption. You will feel worse and more prone to depression afterwards.

2. Have sleep aids on hand.

Magnesium powder and liquid calcium/magnesium supplements found at health food stores, and over-the-counter natural sleep aids may help in getting some sleep, initially. Sleep is usually the first thing to go when tragedy strikes. Consult your doctor first before taking any sleep aids. Visit 180YourLife.com for a listing of my favorite supplements.

3. Exercise

Take a walk with a grieving person. Even if it's just for 10 minutes. Eventually you might work up to 5 miles, but in the first week, 10 to 20 minutes is a minimum per day. The vitamin D from the sunshine is calming to the nervous system. If it's possible, get the body moving, because it will combat extreme stress and help induce sleep.

4. Get the memorial service ready.

Compile favorite musical pieces, designate persons for eulogy speeches, compile a photo montage, have someone videotape the memorial service (lots of amazing things are said about the person who has passed that children may want to view later), post the obituary in the newspaper, and coordinate with the funeral home. Decide to bury or cremate if advance plans were not already made.

5. Coordinate meals.

Designate someone to coordinate meals. Have friends plan healthy meals rather than bring random food. Otherwise, the family may have too many comfort foods and not enough nutrition for the weeks ahead. Consider ordering pre-prepared meals from places like Dinner Affair. That is a great grief gift.

6. Create a list of all the bills.

Designate a trusted family member or friend to organize the bills so they get paid. Make an appointment with a financial planner. If there is not enough money to cover the family bills, people can make a tax-deductible donation to a church or synagogue or another nonprofit, designating that those funds go to the family. Check to see if there is a processing fee from the non-profit, but the majority of the funds should make it to the family, and your donation will be tax deductible.

7. Coordinate with the coroner to order 20 copies of the death certificate. You will need these to handle the estate later.

8. Coordinate childcare and serving meals to the kids. Sometimes the kids and their meals get forgotten in all the bustle of grief.

9. Designate someone to prep clothes for the memorial service (launder and iron clothes for the kids and family).

10. Kids still need to play. If there are young children, have someone take them out to the park. Kids still need to play even where there is grief. It will be a good way for them to do something normal.

Note: If you have life insurance, have someone close to you contact your life insurance representative and notify them of the family loss.

Weeks 2-6 Top Ten List

1. Make a list of all friends who want to help and their areas of expertise. Then give them jobs in their area of knowledge and invite them to participate on an online schedule.

2. Volunteer website. Harness their willingness to help. People want to do something positive with their grief. Let them.

3. Meet with a financial planner. Make your own will, and, if you are not a solo parent, designate legal guardians for your children. Be pro-active. You are may the only pony in the show for your kids, and you need to have emergency plans in place. God forbid, something should happen to you; you don't want your kids to become wards of the state if there is no legal guardian named for your children in a new will.

4. Find grief support for the surviving spouse and children.

Google "Spousal grief support" and "Grief support for children who have lost a parent" along with the locations nearest you. Make an appointment and start going as soon as possible. Consider individual and private family counseling as well.

5. Thank You Notes. Have someone make a list of all the items given to the grieving family and write thank you notes. I don't think this should be done by the grieving spouse unless he or she really wants this task. Have someone make the list, get the addresses, and write the notes, leaving the signature area blank for the surviving spouse to sign.

6. Coordinate teams for childcare, weekend events, and visits to the house. After the bustle of the memorial service, the house gets horrifically quiet, and the reality of the loss settles in with the surviving family. This is the time when the family needs friends the most, and most people have returned to their lives. Offer to take the kids for a fun afternoon or even for the weekend to give the surviving spouse a break. Also, offer to have someone sleep over during that time so the surviving spouse isn't alone in a very quiet house.

7. Create teams or hire-out for lawn care, home care, laundry, food, and exercise. Loan a teenager, in groups of two or three, preferably with adult supervision, once or twice a week as a mother's helper and/or sitter, or send a maid service to the house to do a deep clean.

Exercise your discretion to make sure teens go into a safe environment.

8. Start dealing with the estate. Contact all financial accounts.

Use Death Certificates to close credit cards, student loans, anything that is in the sole name of your spouse. Close email, FB, and other online accounts. Once you get the Death Certificate, submit that right away to the life insurance office.

9. Contact the social security office, bring the death certificate, birth certificates for the family, and the marriage certificate, plus proof of residence to start your social security benefits. Check SocialSecurity.gov for a full list of what is needed for you to receive benefits after the loss of a spouse.

10. Create a schedule for the family. Re-establish order in the home with a routine and, for a time, have friends and family join in that routine.

Months 3- 6 Top 10 List

1. Consider taking a vacation with a friend. Change the scenery. Go see something beautiful.

2. Take a healthy cooking class with a grieving friend.

3. Hire a trainer or commit to an exercise plan with friends.

4. Create a new family budget with a financial planner.

5. Register for a future event like a 5K, 10K, or sprint triathlon.

Train as a group of friends around the grieving person and give yourselves 4-5 months to train.

6. Organize your home. Go room by room and get rid of things that are not necessary. Make every room in your home beautiful. Consider painting some rooms a new color or selling furniture off and redecorating a room.

7. If you are ready, set a date with a friend to deal with the deceased person's clothes and personal items. Save special pieces and give other clothes away, or send them to family members

8. Think about simplifying your life. Are there relationships that are weighing you down? It's okay to calmly and kindly communicate that you need a break from them. Nourish yourself in mind, body, and spirit and circle back, if necessary, when you feel stronger.

9. Create more efficient family processes. Think about creating a chore/reward system for your children. Learn about efficient single parenting strategies. Get ideas from single parent/grief support groups. I actually watched a great deal of the show Super Nanny on Netflix. I got some great strategies on how to positively motivate my children from that show. Also, I watched a great deal of Dog Whisperer. I know kids aren't dogs, but Caesar makes some great points about projecting fear and stress into your environment. Just good food for thought.

10. Do something productive with your grief. Don't veg out in front of the TV. Okay, I give you permission to veg for a few weeks.

But the sooner you get moving, the sooner you will feel better. Start a small garden. Paint a picture, write in a journal, and meet with people who understand your grief. I'm telling you, don't do this alone. You can lose years that way.

11. Organize your financial papers, personal information, and family passwords into a searchable database. You need to find family information quickly and accurately. Use a folder system.

12. If you have photos all over your house of you and your loved one, consider changing out some pictures with new photographs. I personally needed a break from seeing lots of photos of Jason, so I took many down, except in my kids' rooms. When I was ready, I put some back up, along with new photos of our family as we created new memories.

Grief Gifts

Hire a nanny for a week

Have multiple families lend a teenager once a week, so that twice a week, there is a mother's helper for a 2-4 months.

Hire lawn care service or coordinate for 4 months

Purchase 2 weeks of healthy meals for the family using a catering service. Check 180YourLife.com for our favorite links.

Pay for a session with a financial planner

Give a series of massages for the surviving spouse. (This gives the calming gift of human touch, which the spouse is really missing)

Offer a coupon book of free sitting services

Arrange for private family counseling sessions

Give a gift card for a pair of walking/running sneakers from a running store that will give a professional fit.

Pay for healthy cooking classes

Books to buy:

Check out my website 180YourLife.com for my list of favorite books to empower your grief journey.

Kitchen Items to buy:

High Power Blender

High Power Juicer

Top Ten Mistakes of Widowhood & Loss

1. Don't blame yourself.
2. Don't move or run away from your life.
3. Don't sit and watch TV all day.
4. Don't drown your sorrows in sugar, alcohol, or simple carbs.
5. Don't date or sleep with the first guy who shows interest in you, unless he is your husband.
6. Don't think your life is over.
7. Don't do the grief journey alone.
8. Don't rush the process.
9. Don't keep frenemies.

10. Don't try to fit your life into someone else's.

Top Ten Tips for Getting through Widowhood & Loss

1. Let people help you.
2. Know that this will take time.
3. Take care of yourself first.
4. Set a goal for yourself and go after it.
5. Go on a fun adventure.
6. Make The List (3 things that used to make you happy and 3 things that you've always wanted to try and pick on to DO).
7. Ask your kids what they would like to do and do it with them.
8. Do something silly.
9. Try something new.
10. Enjoy simple pleasures.

Top 10 Tips for Getting Through Grief

1. Don't go it alone. Find a community of widows, or people who understand your loss, who are your age to hang out with. Also search for a youth-oriented grief community for your kids to start processing their loss.
2. Get outside for at least a 10-minute walk every day.
3. Remember: Grief is confusing and mentally exhausting. It's like brain fog.
Recruit your friends to help while you are feeling tired. Accept help. Write out lists for everyday tasks.
4. Create a list of friends and their specific skills. Then ask them for help that is in their skill set. Friends and family want to help, but they don't know how in a grief crisis. You have to act as a master coordinator and give direction to helpful desire.
5. Create a schedule for volunteers that covers childcare, laundry, yard work, meals, and home organization. You will need this for at least two months.
6. Keep a schedule for the family. Even if you don't feel like it.
7. Plan something fun once a week. Feeling follows action. At first it will be a form of discipline to get outside and do something fun, but eventually you will enjoy it. Ideas include a walk in the park, going to a movie, making a meal with friends.
8. Nourish your body during grief. Don't get lost in comfort foods, which will feel good at first, but later will leave you feeling more exhausted and depressed. Focus on green veggies, green juices, and green smoothies. The chlorophyll, enzymes, and vitamins from raw fruits and veggies actually refresh your blood cells and help calm your nervous system.
9. Take a five-minute vacation from grieving. Look around you

and appreciate what you do have. Family, friends, a roof over your head, sunshine, food on the table? Focus for five minutes on the blessings. You need “Gratitude Commercials” to take a break from grieving.

10. Laughter and loving your life honor your loved one who has passed. Do something creative to express your grief. Writing, drawing, dancing, music, pottery, flamenco dancing...anything that expresses your feelings in a productive way. You will feel relief by unloading your burden in an expressive way.

Top 10 Grief Mistakes

1. Thinking that this will last forever.
2. Thinking that you will never laugh, love, live a happy life again.
3. Isolating yourself and your family. Seek counseling.
4. Thinking that the best part of your life is in the past. There is beauty in the future.
5. Thinking that healing will just happen. You have to be proactive; claim your healing through wise decisions.
6. Dulling the pain with substance abuse, excessive screen time, or overeating.
7. Trying to make yourself believe platitudes without taking action.
8. Thinking you can handle this all on your own. Grief is like an emotional amputation. You have to re-learn your life. Seek and accept help during this process from a supportive community.
9. Living your deceased spouse's or loved one's life through your current life. You will do that for a time. Just be open to what you want for your life. That is a valid and important question. Dream a little.
10. Making big decisions quickly...like moving or changing a job. Grief is transformative. Your new life will emerge in time. Stay where you are if you can for a few years. It will hurt terribly for a while, but you will also give yourself time to figure out what you want and need in the upcoming chapters of your new life.

Go-To Grief Busters

First, don't try to fight sugar cravings with just will power. You'll probably lose over the long term. That's why it's so important to understand how different foods affect you chemically. Sugar makes you feel great and then, hours later, causes a crash. Simply put, it spikes and then drops your blood sugar, and it has chemically addictive properties. Purpose to eat 5-6 healthy small meals throughout the day to stabilize your blood sugar levels and make sure to drink 8-10 glasses of water. Second, get outside. Take a walk in the sunshine. The sunshine helps boost vitamin D in your body, which naturally calms your nervous system, benefitting your digestive system, which may later help with sleep. Think about it: don't you have a great sleep after a day

at the beach? That's vitamin D working. Consult your doctor to see what's best for you.

Third, make some fresh green juices or green smoothies, and drink them on an empty stomach. Preferably in the morning before breakfast. In the afternoon works too, for that late-day-lag feeling. The live magnesium, natural vitamins, and minerals in these drinks help to calm and nourish the body.

Fourth, take a shower and make yourself look good, even if you feel bad. Hey, why not kick it up a notch? Book a salon appointment for a nice cut and color. While you are at it, get your makeup done. When you look and feel clean and fresh, people respond in a positive way to you, and that helps stop the negative spiral of grief.

Fifth, recruit a friend to exercise with and schedule dates to meet. When I'm grieving, it feels like I'm slogging through cold molasses. The simplest things feel overwhelming. So ask for help. Don't stay stuck. Exercise will get your endorphins going. It will lower your stress. You will feel more relaxed afterwards; your digestion will probably benefit, as will your sleep. Exercise makes your body work more efficiently. Just start with a simple walk around the block and work up from there. I promise, you will start to feel better.

Sixth, tidy up. A clean house feels like a hopeful space. So crank some good tunes and scrub away! If I'm feeling overwhelmed and it's in my budget, I treat myself to the help of a maid for several hours. If that's not affordable, then offer to tag-team house cleaning with a friend. You help them one day, and they help you another. It's so much more fun to do things together.

Seventh, do laundry and put clothes away. Organize your space. If you don't have clothes you love, take a friend and drop by a Goodwill store in a nice neighborhood to give an inexpensive boost to your wardrobe. You can experiment with new looks, and it won't break the bank.

Eighth, laugh. I give you permission to kick back and watch a comedy (just don't watch them endlessly) or go hang out with friends and family who make you laugh. Proverbs 17:22 says, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit drains one's strength." That's actually true.

Ninth, after a good laugh, do something that makes you happy. Take a bike ride, work in the garden, look up something fun to do in your area with friends and family. Intentionally craft your time, don't just let the day roll on without purpose or let it get filled with responsibilities. Give yourself a break. You'll come back to your responsibilities with a fresh perspective.

Tenth, don't go it alone. Activate grief recourses in your area. I know it sucks. Keep taking one more step, making one more good decision. Eventually, the wise decisions will start folding in on themselves, snowballing into your Great Adventure.

"Every one of us is called upon, probably many times, to start a new life.

A frightening diagnosis, a marriage, a move, loss of a job...

And onward full tilt we go, pitched and wrecked and absurdly resolute, driven in spite of everything to make good on a new shore. To be hopeful, to embrace one possibility after another—that is surely the basic instinct...Crying out: High tide!

Time to move out into the glorious debris. Time to take this life for what it is.” – Barbara Kingsolver from

High Tide in Tucson

Support Groups

For more resources and to link with others practicing the 180 Your Life program, visit 180YourLife.com.

Suicidepreventionlifeline.org—Suicidal thoughts are common in those who are grieving. Don't suffer alone. Find a support system.

Reach out. Don't isolate. Suicide.supportgroups.com

DailyStrength.org/c/Widows-Widowers/support-group—An online resource that includes numerous communities. This is a link for widows/widowers.

Training Links: We will be continually working to get discount codes for various races. Visit our website to see if we have a discount for a race in your area.

AtlantaTriClub.com

Team Lady 180 trains with this team. They are very supportive and knowledgeable.

TrainingPeaks.com

A great site for finding or purchasing a training plan.

Sign Up for Races! This is a great starting point for finding races in your area.

IronGirl.com

This is such a fun female-empowerment race! I love the vibe, and it's a significant training goal.

GirlsontheRun.org

My kids naturally want to do what I'm doing. So they want to train and race like mom. What a great way to teach our kids to take positive steps through loss and life. Girls on the Run is a great organization that couples positive life lessons with training girls in the sport of running.

IronKids.com

My oldest daughter completed her first tri at the Iron Kids Triathlon at 7 years old. It was a great experience, and she felt so accomplished to do something that I did too. Check for races in your area. Also check for kids' tri clubs in your area.

Active.com

This is a great resource for finding races at discounted entry fees in your area.

TheColorRun.com

Hands down, this is just a fun race to do. You start clean and end with different colored powder sprayed on you at various stations. At the end, I looked like some Disney Aboriginal Tribeswoman. I loved it, and so did my kids.