

with heartfelt sympathy for your loss

A Guide to Next Steps

*First, please accept our sincere sympathy on the death of your loved one.
Our staff and volunteers feel privileged to have shared your family's journey.*

This booklet was designed to provide you with tools and information on the next steps most often involved when losing a loved one. It will provide an overview of the grieving process and give information on our grief services.

You may be surprised at your own response at the time of death and after. Every person reacts differently. Some experience complete shock. Others may be exhausted physically from caregiving and often there is a period of confusion and inability to focus or make decisions.

The information in this booklet is organized into things that need immediate attention and ideas that may help you go through the next weeks and months of decision making regarding your loved one's possessions and estate.

Asking a family member or trusted friend to assist you during this time is appropriate and helpful. People will feel honored to be asked. There are also a number of resources on our website, HopeWestCO.org, that may be helpful.

We encourage you to call us or come by one of our offices for assistance or guidance.

Things to do right away

Contact Others

- Family member or friend – it is often helpful to ask a friend or family member to help make phone calls for you.
- Agencies involved – if your loved one had other agencies involved in addition to HopeWest, they will need to be contacted, such as Medicaid or other benefits and hired caregivers, etc.
- Churches – your loved one’s church and your own if it is different.

Visit the Mortuary and Discuss

- Options for burial or cremation if not already decided.
- Memorial or funeral services – as difficult as it can be, grieving family members and friends cope better when a remembrance service is held. Your minister or the mortuary can help you plan what would be meaningful to you.
- Death Certificates – we recommend getting 10 -12 copies for your records. Original death certificates are needed to collect various benefits, change bank accounts, work with insurance companies, etc.
- Whether your loved one is eligible for any burial allowances through the social security administration, medicaid and/or the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- The newspaper notice and obituary – notices are free and you can influence the content of the notice. Obituaries are a paid service you may want to consider. The mortuary will review this with you.
- Whether social security needs to be notified of the death and who will do that – you or the mortuary.

If Your Loved One was Cared for at Home

- Return rented medical equipment and/or talk with your HopeWest team about where to donate equipment and supplies you own.
- Dispose of prescription drugs in a safe manner. Cross out any personal information on all medication containers. Keep medications in their original containers when feasible. If not, use a plastic container, such as a plastic beverage container with a screw-top lid. Render all medications unusable by following the instruction below in order to prevent the unintended ingestion of discarded medication.

Liquids and Suppositories – add kitty litter or flour to the container, recap and shake.

Tablets/capsules – add rubbing alcohol or water to the container followed by kitty litter or flour, recap and shake.

Transdermal (skin) patches – while wearing disposable gloves, remove the patch from the packaging. Cut the patch in half, handling it by the edges. Place the patch in a plastic container, add kitty litter or flour to the container and recap.

Medicated ointments and creams – add kitty litter or flour to the container and recap.

Syringes and needles – place in puncture resistant containers, such as empty bleach or detergent bottles.

- These containers should be kept out of the reach of children and adults who may be experiencing confusion. When $\frac{3}{4}$ full, seal with heavy tape, such as duct tape. Place all medication containers in a plain paper bag to discourage identification and tampering. Dispose of the paper bag in a trash bin.

Things to do in coming weeks

Contact Financial Institutions and Advisors

- Banks - may need to determine what automatic withdrawals have been authorized
- Credit card companies
- Financial planners
- Loan holders such as mortgage companies, credit unions and car dealers
- Empty lock boxes
- Tax preparation services

Contact Legal Counsel

- If any property was possessed that was not held in joint tenancy
- For assistance in administering a will

Contact Service Providers to Cancel Service or Change Billing Information

- Post Office
- Newspaper & magazines
- Utilities
- Insurance companies – home, vehicle, long-term care, life, health
- Locate passwords for online accounts

Organize Important Papers

You might consider getting a plastic hanging file tote to keep all the important papers pertaining to the death of your loved one. The documents you should include are:

- Original death certificates
- Copy of the will if available
- Deeds of property
- Last tax return filed and any tax related papers for current year
- Insurance policies – life and health
- Employment benefits
- Property titles – home and vehicle
- Bank account and credit card statements or other bills
- Stock certificates
- Investment or retirement account statements
- Birth certificates
- Marriage certificates
- Military documents and any veterans benefit information
- Copy of person's ID or driver's license

*Only the people who avoid
love can avoid grief.*

*The point is to learn
from it and remain
vulnerable to love.*

– John Brantner

Grief's Journey

HopeWest will continue to provide care throughout your first year of bereavement through *Grief's Journey*, our 12-issue, monthly newsletter that combines general information about loss and grief with proven tips and coping strategies. Newsletters are available to view online at HopeWestCO.org or we can mail to you by request. Physical copies of the newsletters are available at any Heirlooms location.

We hope the information in these newsletters will be helpful throughout your grieving process.

Grief's Journey may ask you to reconsider your thoughts about grief. You will find suggestions and information that normalize many of the reactions you may experience.

If you would like to talk about your loss, reactions or concerns, we invite you to call us so we can connect you with one of our experienced grief counselors.

**View all twelve issues of
Grief's Journey at HopeWestCO.org**

Each person's grief journey is as individual as snowflakes

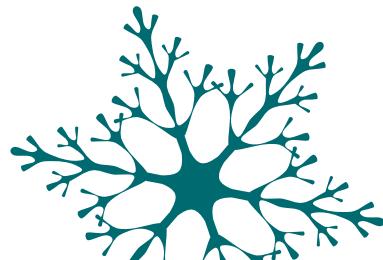
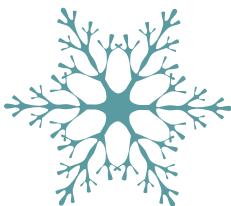
Grief is a natural, necessary and highly personal experience.

The illustration to the right offers a picture of many of the common experiences during the grief journey. Your grief is unique and this may not provide an accurate map of your personal path through these experiences.

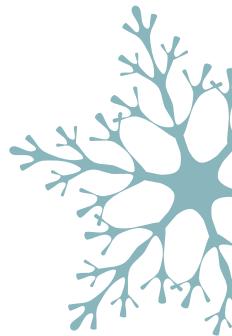
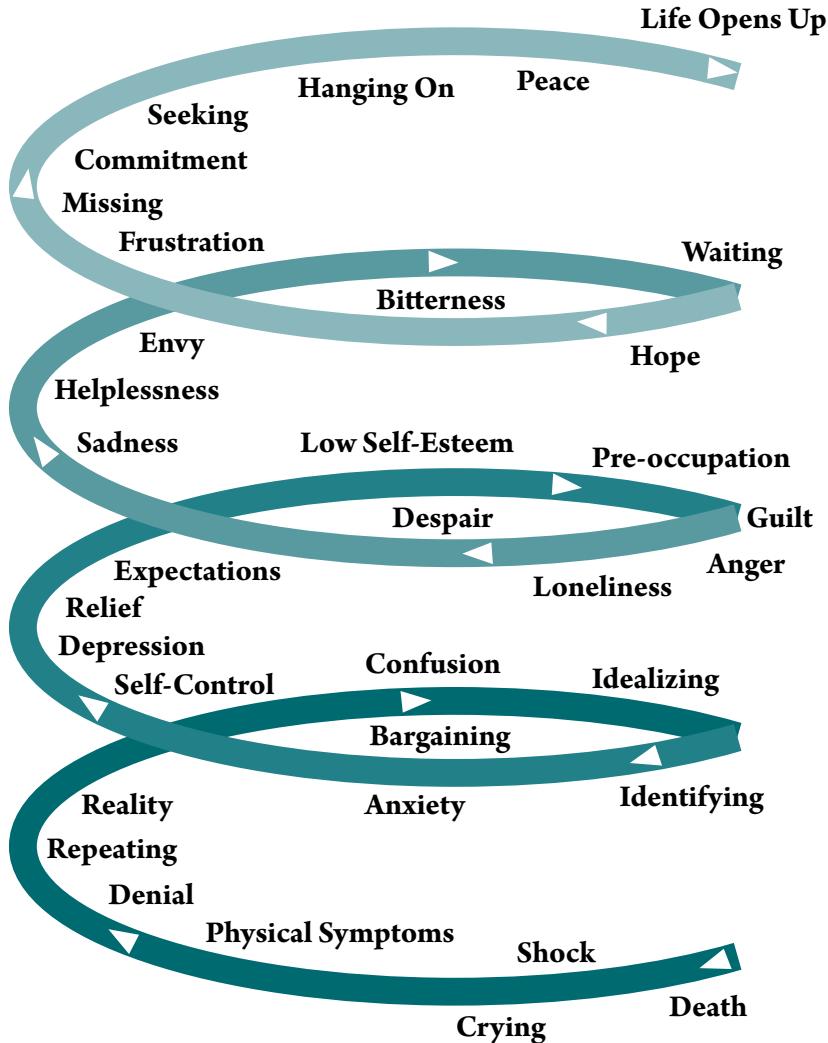
What feelings will be most difficult for you?

How will they affect you?

Despite the variances, learning about grief and sharing your experience with others can help provide comfort after the loss of your loved one.



A Path Through Grief



Grief is a Normal Response to Loss

Grief can be so painful and overwhelming that it can be frightening and confusing.

Many people worry if they are grieving in a normal and healthy way. It may help to know that most people who suffer a loss experience similar feelings.

One or more of the following are normal and natural reactions to a loss:

- Tightness in the throat or heaviness in the chest.
- An empty feeling in the stomach and loss or gain of appetite.
- Restlessness and the desire to look for activity but having difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling as though the loss isn't real and that it didn't actually happen. This may include trying to find your loved one.
- Feeling a sense of your loved one's presence, including expecting him or her to walk in the door at the usual time, hearing his or her voice, or seeing his or her face.
- Difficulty sleeping and having frequent dreams or visions of your loved one.
- Assuming mannerisms or traits of your loved one.
- Feeling guilty or angry over things that happened or didn't happen in your relationship with the person who died.

- Feeling intensely angry at your loved one for leaving you.
- Feeling as though you should not talk about your feelings of loss because other people seem uncomfortable when you do.
- Experiencing sudden mood changes over the slightest things or without explanation.
- Crying at unexpected times.
- Feeling despair over beginning a life without your loved one.

It is important for you to talk and let out your thoughts and feelings with people when you need support. If you are concerned or worried about your reactions, this is the time to contact a grief professional for support.



Taking Care of Yourself

The course of a serious illness has many ups and downs. HopeWest cares for patients and families throughout an illness.

The highly-trained staff at HopeWest also supports families and friends, even after the death of a loved one. It is important to remember to make time for yourself. Find a way to bring the memory of your loved one into your activities.

Here are some suggestions:

- Light a special candle in memory of your loved one.
- Prepare your loved one's favorite meal and share it with friends and family.



- Make an ornament for the Christmas tree. This ornament could be made of something that was special to your loved one or it could be made from a picture of your loved one.
- Visit the cemetery or another special place. Go alone or with others. Say a prayer or bring flowers.
- Plant a tree, bush or other plant in memory of your loved one. You may want to plant it in a pot in the house and transplant it in the spring to the garden.
- Create a scrapbook of pictures, stories or other moments that you can look at from time to time with your family.
- Give friends and family small gifts that belonged to or were special to your loved one.
- Pick a charity that was special to your loved one and make a donation in their name. The donation does not have to be large – every little bit helps.
- Buy a present for your loved one in the form of a gift for your home, the church or synagogue.

Remember, there is no timetable for grief. You will need support from friends and family members in the weeks and months following the loss.

Most importantly, know the resources that are offered within your community. HopeWest is western Colorado's most trusted resource on learning to cope with the loss of a loved one, offering an array of bereavement services that help families learn to cope with grief.

How HopeWest Can Help You

We offer 13 months of bereavement support to the family after the death of their loved one who received hospice care.

This includes phone calls, personal visits from bereavement volunteers and access to *Grief's Journey*, a series of newsletters aimed at helping people work through the grief process. HopeWest offers an array of support groups where you can learn how to cope with grief and connect with others who may share a common bond.

Some of the groups available include:

Mending Hearts

Mending Hearts is an adult support group. In the safety of a group and in an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding, members talk about their feelings and concerns. As they share their experiences, members help each other work through their feelings and come to terms with the new realities of life.

Healing Hearts

Healing Hearts will help you explore your feelings while connecting you with a group of caring people who are facing similar experiences. This group is perfect for working professionals or caregivers who cannot get away during the day.

Individual & Family Counseling

Appointments for counseling sessions are available to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one or for children who are connected to someone with a serious illness.

Angel Babies

Angel Babies is a grief support group for parents and family members who have experienced the loss of a baby during pregnancy or shortly thereafter. A professional counselor and group of volunteers will provide an atmosphere where each member of the group can feel comfortable sharing their experience or quietly listening and learning from others.

**Community support opportunities and dates vary by location.
Please call your local office to inquire what is currently offered.**

Delta (970) 874-6823 • Grand Junction (970) 241-2212

Meeker (970) 878-9383 • Montrose (970) 240-7734

Plateau Valley (970) 241-2212



Parent's Corner

Talking to Children About Death

Often parents ask how to talk to their children about death. Many feel helpless when trying to explain death or they want to protect their children from emotional pain.

However, professional experience with children has shown that they are resilient and can work through their grief with time, understanding and support. Without this opportunity, behavioral and emotional problems may arise either immediately or in the future.



Don't force their feelings of grief. Allow your children to express them naturally in their own way and in their own time.

Just as we encourage you to fully participate in your own healing journey, you can help your children move through their grief. **Below are tips that you may find helpful:**

- You're a role model for your children; if you hide your grief, they learn to hide it too. Instead, set an example for your children by freely sharing your feelings with them. It's okay for your children to see you angry, upset, crying and relieved.
- Tell your children immediately when the death occurs. Gently explain what has happened, what is happening now and why you are upset or crying. Explain the death in terms that your children can understand. Use terms such as "die," "died," "dying." Words and expressions like "sleeping peacefully," "passed away," "departed," "expired" and "lost" only confuse children.
- Don't force their feelings of grief. Allow your children to express them naturally in their own way and in their own time.
- Really listen to what your children are asking or saying. To understand what they are expressing you may need to ask further questions without making it an interrogation.
- Maintain routines as much as possible. It may help your children to remain in familiar places (their rooms, their home) and with familiar loved ones.

HopeWest Kids

HopeWest Kids is the only program of its kind in western Colorado. It provides grief and bereavement services to children, teens and their families who are coping with the serious illness or death of a loved one. Specially trained counselors offer grief education and counseling in Delta, Mesa, Montrose, Ouray and Rio Blanco counties.

Equine Program

Our equine assisted learning program offers children and teens a unique way to process the thoughts and feelings associated with grief. These seven-week groups provide a variety of activities and interaction with horses. No riding is involved.

School Programs

Grief support groups are co-facilitated with school counselors and provide education and experiences with peers who are coping with grief. This service is free of charge.

Individual & Family Counseling

Counseling can help children and families communicate about their experiences, learn to utilize coping skills, grow and heal through their difficult experiences. Services are covered by some insurance plans, offered on a sliding scale and scholarships are available.

Family Support Groups

The 'Forget-Me-Not' grief group provides support for children and family members. Groups are held for different age groups and utilize journaling, art, music and other activities aimed at helping families adjust to their loss.

Summer Camps

Itty Bitty Day Camp, Camp Good Grief and Teen Retreat are all age specific camps where children and teens can interact with peers who have suffered a similar loss of a loved one. Teamwork takes place, friendships are made and healing occurs in this fun, camp environment.

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Lasting Tributes

Memorial Tributes

Memorial tributes create a lasting way to honor those who have touched our lives, while ensuring HopeWest can continue the important work of providing care to anyone in need. Each of our campuses provide many ways to celebrate the life of your loved one with a special tribute.

Some of our opportunities include:

- Memorial Bricks displayed along Dan's Walk at the HopeWest Hospice Care Center in Grand Junction – bricks are given to anyone who designates HopeWest for memorials. They may also be purchased.
- Memorial Aspen Leaves displayed at the Montrose Center for Hope.

We also offer a complimentary option on our website to create a tribute in honor or memory of your loved one to share with friends and family, visit [HopeWestCO.Org/Tributes](https://www.HopeWestCO.Org/Tributes) to learn more. For more information please call (970) 257-2365.

Honor Loved One's Treasures at Heirlooms

After the death of a loved one, it can be difficult to decide what to do with their belongings. Heirlooms is a special part of the community and provides a way to honor your loved one's treasures by donating. Heirlooms accepts home décor, clothing, jewelry and antiques. All proceeds from the resale shops in Grand Junction, Delta and Montrose support the mission of HopeWest. Please visit [HeirloomsforHospice.org](https://www.HeirloomsforHospice.org) for more information.

Delta

195 Stafford Lane
PO Box 24
Delta, CO 81416
(970) 874-6823

Meeker

575 3rd Street
Meeker, CO 81641
(970) 878-9383

Grand Junction

Administrative Offices
Mike & Kay Ferris Care Center
3090 North 12th Street, Unit B
Grand Junction, CO 81506
(970) 241-2212

Montrose

725 South 4th Street
Montrose, CO 81401
(970) 240-7734

**The Herb & Laura May Bacon
Center for Living Your Best**
2754 Compass Drive, Suite 377
Grand Junction, CO 81506
(970) 241-2212

Plateau Valley

PO Box 294
Collbran, CO 81624
(970) 487-3844

