

# 20 Grief Journal Prompts & Tips For Getting Started

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A grief journal is a tool to understand your feelings and emotions after a significant death or loss. Grief experts say that writing can be like therapy, in that it helps you understand yourself and your grief, share your experiences, and reconnect with the world.<sup>1</sup> There are useful guidelines and journaling prompts for grief that will help you get the maximum benefit from grief journaling.

## Benefits of a Grief Journal

[Journaling](#) is a good way to [cope with grief](#) and feel some sense of control over emotions like [depression](#), sadness, and anxiety that are linked to grief. A principle in [grief therapy](#) is that reconstructing your personal narrative is critical for the healing process and journaling will provide a venue for expression without fear of judgement.<sup>2</sup>

Here are benefits associated with keeping a grief journal:<sup>3</sup>

- Grief journaling is a comforting, safe [ritual](#) to communicate with the person you lost
- It's an effective way to record and reflect on important memories and thoughts
- Writing and rereading a grief journal allows you to track and reflect on how you've coped
- Grief journaling can have a calming effect that helps manage and reduce stress
- Grief journaling improves your clarity and ability to problem-solve and develop new perspective

## 20 Grief Journal Prompts

There is no right or wrong way to write a grief journal. It's a tool that can be used to mourn and cope with the [loss of a parent](#), [grandparent](#), friend, [child](#), or even a [pet](#). The most meaningful way to create a grief journal will vary from person to person. Don't judge or edit yourself as you write. Unedited self-narration is the most effective way to help begin your healing.

People frequently turn to journaling prompts for grief to help create a starting place or structure to use as they write. Some people even believe that goal-directed writing offers greater personal fulfillment.<sup>3</sup>

Here are 20 journal prompts for grief to get you started:<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Today I am really missing...

Prompts like these have a calming effect on the person writing it because sometimes it is hard to recall [good memories](#) in the midst of grief. Reminiscing fond memories can have a calming effect both physically and emotionally.

### 2. The hardest time of day is...

This prompt helps you begin to analyze the times that are most challenging and why. For example, perhaps this is an unstructured time and you have too much time to think about your loss. Once you're aware of these dynamics, you can begin to use coping techniques to offset the intensity of the feelings of loss. By identifying times

that these feelings are particularly hard allows you to structure an activity during this time of day.

**3. I have been feeling a lot of...**

The act of identifying feelings and allowing yourself to be aware of and vulnerable to them is the first step in healing. This prompt allows you to begin to initiate this process and move forward.

**4. A comforting memory of my loved one is...**

Recalling a memory that brings comfort can help you feel closer to a loved one who has died. It also has physiological benefits as the act of recalling these memories can reduce blood pressure and alleviate stress.

**5. Whenever I start to feel overwhelmed by pain, regret, guilt, or despair, I will...**

**6. To be more compassionate toward myself, I am willing to try...**

Prompts like these help you identify techniques that help manage painful, negative emotions. They can also help you regain a sense of control over your emotions which can be an empowering experience.

**7. I wish I knew how...**

Reflecting on this prompt can help to identify specific tasks or goals that need to be developed in order to move forward in the grief process. It also helps to increase self awareness, and can help you understand how you can help yourself.

**8. I need more of...**

**9. I need less of...**

Prompts like these are helpful to organize your thoughts and efforts and prioritize your needs. It can help you identify people, tasks, or resources, both internal and external, that can help facilitate your healing. This is another example of gaining some control over your healing process.

**10. If I could forgive myself for something it would be...**

**11. If I could forgive you for something it would be...**

[Guilt](#) and regret are powerful emotions that are often experienced in the midst of grief. We can't change things that have happened in the past. This exercise helps us to recognize this, and can help you better understand this concept. This type of reflection can result in much needed [self compassion](#) and understanding and compassion for the person that has died.

**12. My best time with you was when...**

**13. My hardest time with you was when...**

These prompts can provide important insights regarding the nature of your relationship with the loved one who has died. People can sometimes romanticize a past relationship with someone who has died, making the loss feel greater and more painful. Remembering both good and bad times can lend a more realistic perspective.

**14. When I feel most overwhelmed with grief, the thing that helps the most is when I tell myself...**

Putting these thoughts on paper is a very helpful tool for identifying self help techniques to help manage grief when it becomes debilitating. It can remind you that

you have internal resources that you can tap into to begin to manage the intensity of your grief.

**15. The thing that brings me the most comfort is...**

**16. The things I can do to help celebrate your memory are...**

These prompts are a wonderful way to tap into good times and memories, which can be lost in the midst of grief. They can offer powerful insights about tangible things you can do to honor the memory of a lost loved one and simultaneously bring comfort to yourself.

**17. I know I am feeling better because...**

One of the most valuable aspects of grief journaling is that it is a way to chart progress and challenges as grief is experienced. People find it very helpful to look back and read what they have written. It can offer clear reminders of where you were emotionally at different points along the way while grieving. For many people, it shows how far they have come over a period of time which can be hard to otherwise recognize.

**18. Write a message to your loved one.**

**19. Write down something your loved one said to you or did for you and why it meant/means so much.**

One of the hardest aspects of loss and grief is not having a person we loved and counted on for support there to talk to physically. These exercises are a means of having a conversation and creating a sense of closeness again. The act of writing and bringing back these memories can have a calm and soothing effect.

**20. Select a word that best describes how you feel today. Why does it describe what you are feeling? What does it mean? If you are uncomfortable with it how can you change it to feel better? What happened to make you feel this way?**

This is another exercise that can help you, in the midst of grief, clarify your thoughts and feelings. Rereading these entries can create a deeper understanding of your journey through grief and what you did to try to cope with and manage it. It helps identify techniques that worked and did not work. These are skills that can be used in the future to face painful moments related to grief.

## **Tips For Journaling Regularly**

Pick a journal that you like that will feel welcoming when you see it, touch it, or write in it. Some people may prefer to write on a computer. If writing is too intimidating you may want to at least start with an audio journal. Some authors recommend creating rituals to facilitate their writing.

The frequency of writing is important to help create a routine. The more regularly you write, the more comfortable it becomes as an exercise. Don't tell yourself you have to write a certain amount of daily content, but even if you write a couple of sentences, that's something you can look back on and reflect on.

Here are a few tips to help you stay on track with journaling:<sup>5,6</sup>

- Determine the best time of day for you to journal

- Create a space for journaling whether that's in your favorite chair, your office, or in front of your fireplace
- Decide if you want to use a computer or pen and paper
- Once you decide to journal, do it in the same way and place every time
- Limit distractions like music, radio, or TV
- Put your electronic devices away so you can give your full attention

## Final Thoughts On Journaling Through Grief

Grief journaling is an effective way to begin to process your feelings after the loss of a loved one.<sup>7</sup> This process can give you a greater understanding of what you need as you learn to cope with your grief. Using grief writing prompts can also give you a sense of control, which can help you to manage and cope with grief as you begin to move forward after a major loss.

### 7 Sources

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