FINDING PEACE AFTER PAIN:



A WORKBOOK ON RECOVERING FROM GRIEF

Finding Peace After Pain

A Workbook on Recovering from Grief

By Kathy Simmons
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Disclaimer

This workbook is designed for educational and personal growth purposes only.
It is **not a substitute for professional counseling, therapy, or medical advice.**
If you are experiencing severe emotional distress or thoughts of self-harm, please contact a licensed mental health professional, counselor, or call the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** for immediate support.

The author has shared personal reflections and practical insights gained through lived experience and professional recovery coaching. Every reader's healing journey is unique — please take what resonates, and leave the rest with love.

💫 ***"Peace doesn't mean the pain is gone — it means we've learned to live alongside it."***

About This Workbook

Grief touches every one of us. It shows up after death, heartbreak, addiction, trauma, or even the loss of who we used to be. It can feel like the world stops — while everyone else keeps moving. But healing doesn't mean forgetting; it means *finding peace after pain*.

This workbook is for anyone navigating grief in all its forms — the kind that comes from losing a loved one, a relationship, a dream, a home, a job, your health, or even your sense of self.
It honors **all spiritual paths**, welcoming readers from every walk of life. Whether you call your Higher Power God, the Universe, Love, or simply the power within you — this is a safe space to heal, grow, and rediscover hope.

You'll learn to understand grief, sit with it, and eventually find light again. Through reflection, journaling, affirmations, and gentle guidance, this book will help you make peace with what was, embrace what is, and open your heart to what's yet to come.

About the Author

Kathy Simmons is a Certified Recovery Coach, author, speaker, and founder of *The Other Side of Rock Bottom*, a recovery-based community dedicated to helping people find life after loss, addiction, and trauma.
Kathy is known for her raw honesty, humor, and heart. Her own journey through abuse, addiction, and profound grief inspired her to dedicate her life to helping others heal. She believes recovery isn't just about staying clean — it's about rediscovering who you were always meant to be.

Kathy has written several workbooks and guides for healing, including:

- *Welcome to Mental Health and/or Addiction Recovery*
- *Reclaiming Me: A Workbook on Healing from Narcissistic Abuse*
- *The 12 Steps for Everyday Life*

Through her books, workshops, and daily meetings, Kathy continues to share her message:

There is life on the other side of rock bottom — and peace after pain.

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🌧️ Chapter 1: Understanding Grief

“Grief is the price we pay for love.” – Queen Elizabeth II

💭 What Is Grief, Really?

Grief is love with nowhere to go. It’s the echo of connection after something or someone we love is gone. It’s not just sadness — it’s the collision of love, loss, confusion, anger, disbelief, guilt, and sometimes even relief (and yes, that last one can make you feel crazy, but it’s normal too).

We tend to think of grief as something that only happens when someone dies. But grief shows up in *so many forms*.
We grieve breakups, lost friendships, the version of ourselves that didn’t survive the trauma, the house we had to leave, the job that ended, the health we used to have, the child we thought we’d raise differently, or even the addiction we let go of.

Every loss leaves a space where something once lived — and that space doesn’t stay empty. It fills with memories, questions, and longing. And that’s grief’s job — to help us *feel* the impact of what’s changed so we can one day find peace with it.

🕰️ There’s No Timeline for Healing

Let’s get one thing straight: there is *no* expiration date on grief.

If anyone tells you, “It’s been a year, aren’t you over it yet?” — please resist the urge to throat-punch them (in your mind, not in real life 😉).

Grief doesn’t care about calendars or clocks. Some days, you’ll be okay. Then one day, you’ll smell their perfume, or see a photo, or hear a song — and suddenly, it’s like no time has passed at all.

That’s not backsliding. That’s remembering.
Healing isn’t forgetting — it’s learning to remember with more love than pain.

🌊 Grief Comes in Waves

If you’ve ever been to the ocean, you know how waves work — some crash hard, some barely touch your feet, and some take you by surprise. Grief is like that.

One moment you're fine, folding laundry or driving to work, and the next you're sobbing in the cereal aisle because you saw their favorite brand.

You're not losing your mind. You're *feeling*.
Grief doesn't come to destroy you; it comes to cleanse you — to wash through the parts of you that loved deeply and lost deeply.

Let those waves move. Don't bottle them up. The only way out is through.

💔 Why Grief Feels So Personal

Because it is.

No two people grieve the same way. Some cry, some get angry, some go numb, some throw themselves into projects, and some pull away completely. None of those responses make you broken — they make you *human*.

There's no right or wrong way to grieve. The only mistake we can make is pretending we don't need to.

Sometimes we expect grief to follow an orderly path — denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance — but in reality, it's more like spaghetti. You might hit all those stages before breakfast.

That's okay. Healing isn't linear; it's layered.

✨ What Grief Teaches Us

Believe it or not, grief can be one of our greatest teachers. It shows us how deep our love runs. It strips away the illusion of control. It reminds us how precious every moment really is.

Through grief, we learn to appreciate presence, to listen to silence, and to cherish what remains.
We begin to rebuild our lives — not as they were, but as they *can be* now.

And that's where peace begins — not in pretending the loss didn't happen, but in honoring it while still choosing life.

🪞 Reflection

Think about a time in your life when you experienced loss — any kind of loss.
How did it change you?
Did it make you more compassionate? More guarded? More appreciative of what you still have?

Grief leaves fingerprints on the soul. Sometimes those prints hurt. But sometimes, they guide us toward growth we didn't even know was possible.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What losses have shaped who you are today?
2. What does grief feel like for you — physically, mentally, spiritually?
3. What do you wish people understood about *your* grief?
4. How has your grief changed the way you see love, life, or faith?

💬 Affirmation

"I honor my grief as love that has nowhere to go. I don't need to rush my healing. My pain is proof of how deeply I've loved — and love is never wasted."

🌙 Chapter 2: The Many Faces of Loss

“Grief is not a sign of weakness, nor a lack of faith — it is the price of love.” – Unknown

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💔 Grief Isn’t Just About Death

When people hear the word *grief*, they usually picture funerals, black clothes, and casseroles on the porch. But grief wears many faces — and not all of them come with condolences.

Sometimes, grief walks in quietly when no one’s died — but something inside *has*.

We grieve breakups.
We grieve the loss of friendships that faded without closure.
We grieve our childhoods when we realize they were more painful than we ever admitted.
We grieve our health when our bodies no longer do what they once did.
We grieve jobs, dreams, innocence, safety, homes, routines, and seasons of life that will never return.

Loss isn’t just about who we’ve lost — it’s about *what* we’ve lost, too.
And all of it matters.

🌫️ The Grief Nobody Talks About

This is what I call *invisible grief* — the kind that doesn’t get flowers or sympathy cards.

It’s the single mother who’s grieving the life she thought she’d have.
It’s the man sober for a year who quietly grieves the escape he gave up.
It’s the daughter who’s still alive, but emotionally gone.
It’s the person smiling in public but breaking in private because the world doesn’t recognize their loss.

When no one acknowledges our pain, we start to question it ourselves:
“Maybe I shouldn’t be this upset.”
“Other people have it worse.”
“My loss doesn’t count.”

But grief doesn’t work that way. There’s no hierarchy.
Pain is pain. Loss is loss. Your heart doesn’t care if the world validates it or not — it still needs space to heal.

🧩 Cumulative and Compounded Grief

Sometimes, it's not just one loss — it's *layer upon layer* of them.

When we haven't had time to heal one wound before another hits, our grief can start to pile up. That's called *compounded grief*.
Maybe you lost your mom, then your marriage, then your job, then your sense of identity — all before you had time to process the first blow.

This can leave you feeling exhausted, numb, or like you're barely holding it together.
If that's you, please hear this: You are not weak. You are *human*.
You've been carrying too much for too long, and your spirit is asking for rest.

Grief isn't meant to be carried alone — and it's never too late to unpack it, piece by piece.

🌿 Generational and Collective Grief

Grief can be inherited, too. Sometimes, we carry pain that isn't even ours.
Families pass down unspoken losses — trauma, addiction, abuse, abandonment — and those stories shape how we love, cope, and connect.

There's also *collective grief* — the kind we feel when tragedy strikes our community or the world.
It's the heaviness in your chest when you hear bad news, or the ache of watching suffering and feeling helpless.

We grieve not only what's personal, but what's shared — because grief, at its core, is the most human thing about us.

🕯️ The Grief of Change

Even good change can bring grief.
Moving to a new home, starting a new job, ending a chapter of life — even though it's exciting, it can still sting.

Why? Because change means letting go of something familiar.
We're wired to crave what we know — even if what we knew wasn't healthy.
So when we step into something new, it's normal to feel a mix of sadness and hope.

Let yourself feel both. That's balance. That's growth.

🪞 Reflection

Take a moment to think about all the kinds of loss you've experienced — not just the obvious ones.
The people, places, things, and even *versions of yourself* that are no longer here.

You don't have to compare your pain to anyone else's.
Grief is not a competition. It's an invitation — to honor what mattered, to release what's gone, and to open your heart to what remains.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What kinds of loss (death, relationship, identity, health, etc.) are you grieving right now?
2. Which of your past losses still feel unhealed or unspoken?
3. What kind of grief do you carry that others might not see or understand?
4. How do you tend to cope when you feel loss — do you avoid, distract, or allow yourself to feel?

💬 Affirmation

"My pain is valid, even if others don't understand it. I no longer minimize my losses or hide my tears. Every ending I've survived has made me stronger, wiser, and more compassionate."

🌱 Chapter 3: Grieving the Self

“Sometimes you have to lose yourself to find who you were meant to be.” – Unknown

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💭 The Loss Nobody Warns You About

When we think of grief, we usually think about losing *someone else.* But one of the deepest and most confusing kinds of grief is losing *ourselves.*

You know what I mean — that moment when you wake up and realize you don’t recognize the person staring back in the mirror. Maybe life, trauma, addiction, caregiving, or heartbreak changed you. Maybe it’s been so long since you’ve felt free that you forgot what that even means.

This kind of grief doesn’t come with sympathy cards or casseroles. It comes with silence, confusion, and sometimes guilt — because how do you explain to someone that you miss *you*?

But the truth is, we all go through seasons where we lose sight of who we are. And that’s okay. Sometimes the person we used to be couldn’t survive the storm we went through — and that’s not failure. That’s transformation.

🦋 The Death of Who We Were

Growth requires loss.
To become who we’re meant to be, we have to let go of who we were pretending to be.

For many of us, the hardest part of healing is grieving the old identity — even if it wasn’t healthy.
You might miss the version of yourself who didn’t know pain, who still had hope, who laughed easier, trusted more, or believed life would turn out a certain way.

That version of you may never return — and that’s not something to feel ashamed of.
You’ve evolved. You’ve survived. You’ve grown stronger.

But it’s okay to still *miss her.*
She did the best she could with what she knew.

🌧️ Grieving Who We Were in Addiction or Survival Mode

This one hits home for a lot of us in recovery. When we put down the substance, the chaos, or the coping mechanism — we're not just losing a habit; we're losing an entire identity.

Addiction can take over who we are — our routines, our friends, our coping, our sense of purpose. And when it's gone, we're left asking, *"Who am I now?"*

It's the same with trauma or long-term caregiving — we can get so wrapped up in surviving someone else's crisis that we forget how to live our own life.

So when the dust settles, it's natural to feel empty. But that emptiness isn't failure — it's space. It's sacred space being cleared for *rebirth*.

🌤️ The Grief That Comes After Healing

Here's the part no one tells you: healing can also bring grief.

When you start recovering, setting boundaries, and walking in your worth, you'll outgrow people, places, and patterns that once felt like home. And even though it's healthy — it still hurts.

You might grieve old friendships, family dynamics, or ways of coping that no longer serve you.
You might even grieve the comfort of chaos — because calm can feel unfamiliar when you've lived in survival mode for years.

That doesn't mean you're going backward. It means you're *becoming*.

Every time you choose growth over familiarity, you're honoring the new you being born out of loss.

💞 Rediscovering Yourself

Grieving the self isn't just about mourning who you were — it's also about rediscovering who you *are now*.

Who are you without the pain, the addiction, the relationship, the role, or the mask?
What do you love now? What makes you feel alive?

This is the sacred middle space between "no longer" and "not yet."
It's uncomfortable — but it's where rebirth happens.

Take your time here. Reintroduce yourself to yourself.
You've earned this new beginning.

🪞 Reflection

You've been through a lot. Some of the parts of you that fell away were never meant to stay. And others — the ones that were buried under pain — are waiting to be rediscovered.

Healing doesn't erase who you were; it integrates all the versions of you into someone wiser, softer, and stronger.

You're not starting over — you're *starting fresh*.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What parts of yourself have you lost along the way?
2. What parts of you are you starting to reconnect with?
3. When you think about who you used to be, what comes up — sadness, gratitude, anger, pride, or all of the above?
4. Who are you becoming now, and what would that version of you say to your past self?

💭 Affirmation

"I honor the person I used to be, and I give myself permission to grow beyond her. I am allowed to change. I am allowed to begin again. I am finding myself, piece by piece, with grace and love."

🔥 Chapter 4: The Grief of Addiction and Recovery

“When we let go of what destroys us, we must also grieve the part of us that thought it was keeping us alive.” – Unknown

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💭 Letting Go of What Once Numbed the Pain

Nobody really tells you this part — that recovery isn’t just about getting clean or sober. It’s about learning how to *grieve*.

When we let go of drugs, alcohol, or any other addiction, we’re not just quitting a behavior — we’re burying an entire lifestyle, an identity, and in some ways, a coping mechanism that once helped us survive.

It’s easy to look back and wonder, *“How could I possibly grieve something that almost destroyed me?”*
But if we’re being honest — it didn’t start out that way. It started as relief. As escape. As something that seemed to take the edge off the pain we didn’t yet know how to face.

So when we finally let it go, it’s not just the substance or the behavior we miss — it’s the illusion of comfort, control, or connection it once gave us.

That’s grief.
And it’s okay to feel it.

🌪️ The Death of an Identity

Addiction becomes part of who we think we are — it shapes our routines, our friendships, even our sense of purpose.
So when it’s gone, it can feel like a death.

In early recovery, I remember thinking, *“Who am I without it?”*
Every hour used to revolve around using, recovering, or hiding it — and suddenly, I had all this empty space I didn’t know how to fill.

That space was terrifying at first.
But what I didn’t realize was that space wasn’t punishment — it was freedom waiting to be discovered.

Recovery strips away everything false until all that’s left is *you*.
And sometimes, that’s the scariest — and most beautiful — thing in the world.

🕯️ Grieving the People, Places, and Things

When we enter recovery, we don't just say goodbye to substances — we often lose people, places, and things tied to that life.
The friends who still use. The familiar hangouts. The late-night chaos that used to feel like belonging.

Letting go hurts. But the truth is — not everyone can come with us where we're going.
Some people were part of our survival story, not our healing story.

It's okay to grieve them.
It's also okay to love them from afar while protecting your peace.

Every time you choose sobriety over the past, you're not just staying clean — you're reclaiming your life.

⚖️ The Grief Hidden Inside Recovery

Recovery brings up grief we never faced while using.
All the pain we numbed — the losses, traumas, regrets, and guilt — come bubbling to the surface once the fog lifts.

It can feel overwhelming.
But this is where true healing begins — not in avoiding the pain, but in finally giving it a voice.

It's okay to cry.
It's okay to feel angry, lost, or lonely.
It's okay to admit that some days, recovery feels heavier than the addiction ever did.

That's not weakness — that's honesty.
And honesty is the foundation of healing.

🌅 Finding Life on the Other Side of Rock Bottom

Here's the miracle: grief in recovery doesn't last forever.
Eventually, the tears stop being about what you've lost — and start being about what you've *found*.

You'll start to rediscover laughter that isn't forced, relationships that are real, mornings that don't come with regret.
You'll find yourself saying, *"I didn't know life could feel this peaceful."*

That's the other side of rock bottom — not a perfect life, but a peaceful one.
You'll never stop being grateful that you chose to live.

💞 Redemption Through Recovery

You might still carry guilt or shame from your past — but grace has a way of rewriting those stories.
Every time you share your truth, help someone else, or make an amends, you're turning your pain into purpose.

Recovery teaches us that the same heart that once broke can also heal others.
You are proof that transformation is possible — not despite your grief, but because of it.

🪞 Reflection

Think about everything you've released on your recovery journey — the substances, the people, the places, the habits.
Now think about everything you've gained — clarity, freedom, peace, and the chance to start again.

Grief and gratitude can coexist. You can miss the old life and still be thankful you're no longer living it.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What have you had to grieve since beginning your recovery journey?
2. What parts of your old identity still try to pull you back?
3. What has recovery given you that addiction never could?
4. How can you honor your past self without returning to old pain?

💬 **Affirmation**

“I can feel and heal what I used to numb. I release the life that nearly broke me and embrace the one I’m creating now. My story is not over — it’s being rewritten in grace and truth.”

🌾 Chapter 5: The Body Remembers

“Our bodies keep the score of every joy and every sorrow.” – Inspired by Bessel van der Kolk

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💭 Grief Lives in the Body

Grief doesn’t just live in the heart or mind — it lives in the body too.
It shows up in tight shoulders, aching backs, sleepless nights, foggy heads, and heavy chests. It’s not all in your imagination — your body is speaking the language of loss.

When we experience grief, our nervous system goes into overdrive. Our hearts race, our stomachs churn, our muscles tense. We might feel exhausted but unable to rest. Some people overeat; others forget to eat at all. Some get sick more often.

Why? Because the body and mind aren’t separate. When the heart breaks, the body listens.

🪨 What the Body Tries to Tell Us

Grief sends signals — not to punish, but to protect.
It’s your body’s way of saying, *“Slow down. Something needs your attention.”*

- Fatigue means your energy is being spent healing what can’t be seen.
- Tightness in your chest means your heart is carrying more than it can hold.
- Stomach issues or nausea mean your gut is responding to emotional shock.
- Headaches can come from uncried tears.
- Insomnia often shows up when your mind is still trying to process what your heart can’t yet accept.

When we ignore those signals, our bodies get louder. But when we listen — when we rest, hydrate, stretch, breathe, and honor our limits — healing begins to flow through us again.

🌿 The Importance of Rest and Nourishment

In grief, even basic self-care can feel impossible.
Cooking a meal might feel pointless. Showering might feel exhausting. But these small acts are sacred. They tell your body, *“I’m still here. I’m still worthy of care.”*

Your body has carried you through loss, through addiction, through heartbreak — it deserves gentleness, not punishment.
So rest when you need to. Eat something nourishing. Step outside for sunlight. Drink water.
You don't need to "bounce back." You need to *breathe through*.

💫 Grounding the Grief

When grief makes you feel scattered or disconnected, grounding techniques can help bring you back into your body. Try one or two of these when the waves hit hard:

- **Deep breathing:** Inhale slowly for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 6.
- **Touch therapy:** Wrap yourself in a blanket, hold a warm cup, or place a hand over your heart.
- **Movement:** Take a walk, stretch, or sway gently with music — movement releases stored emotion.
- **Nature:** Step outside and let the air touch your skin. Feel grass beneath your feet.
- **Writing:** When you can't speak, let your pen do the talking.

Your body holds your story — but it also holds your healing.

🩶 When the Body Feels Unsafe

For many trauma survivors, being *in* the body can feel unsafe.
If you've been through abuse, addiction, or trauma, you may have learned to disconnect from your body as a survival mechanism.

That's okay. You don't have to rush reconnecting.
Start small. Notice your breathing. Touch your hands together. Feel your heartbeat.
You're safe now — and your body deserves to know it.

Healing isn't about forcing comfort; it's about slowly rebuilding trust between your spirit and your skin.

🪞 Reflection

Think of your body as your oldest friend — the one who has walked through every loss with you.
It remembers everything you've survived — but it also remembers how to heal.

Listen to it. Thank it. Care for it like you would a child learning to feel safe again.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. How has your body responded to grief (pain, fatigue, restlessness, etc.)?
2. What messages might your body be trying to send you right now?
3. What's one small act of care you can give your body today — rest, movement, hydration, or stillness?
4. How can you show gratitude to your body for carrying you through everything you've endured?

💬 Affirmation

"I will listen to my body with patience and love. It is not my enemy — it's my companion in healing. Every breath, every tear, every heartbeat brings me closer to peace."

🌤️ Chapter 6: Faith, Doubt, and the Search for Meaning

“Faith is not the absence of doubt; it’s choosing to keep walking even when we can’t see the road.” – Unknown

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💭 When Grief Shakes What We Believe

Grief has a way of rattling the very foundation of what we thought we believed.
You might find yourself asking:
“Why would a loving God allow this?”
“Where were You when I needed You?”
Or maybe: “Do I even believe anymore?”

If those questions sound familiar — you’re not faithless, you’re *human*.
Loss makes us wrestle with life’s biggest questions. It strips away the shallow answers and demands something real.

Even people with unshakable faith can feel shaken in deep grief. It’s okay to question, to doubt, to feel angry at your Higher Power — or even to feel nothing at all.
God (or whatever name you give your Source) can handle your honesty.

🌧️ Faith and Grief Can Coexist

Faith and grief are not opposites.
You can believe and still ache.
You can trust and still cry.
You can pray and still feel lost.

Faith doesn’t erase the pain — it gives us somewhere to bring it.
Sometimes faith is a whisper: *“I don’t understand this, but I’ll keep breathing anyway.”*
Other times it’s a cry: *“Help me, because I can’t do this alone.”*

And that’s enough. That’s grace.

🌙 The Silence of Heaven

There’s a moment in grief when heaven feels silent — like your prayers are hitting the ceiling and falling back down unanswered.
That silence can be crushing.

But silence doesn't mean absence.
Sometimes, the Divine is quiet not because we're being ignored, but because we're being held.
Sometimes peace whispers instead of roars.

Faith isn't always about hearing a response — sometimes it's about learning to rest in the mystery.

🌈 Spiritual Growth Through Grief

Grief can deepen our spirituality, even if it first feels like it's destroying it.
In the ashes of loss, we often find a truer, humbler kind of faith — one that's not based on rules or religion, but on relationship and experience.

We begin to see life differently.
The little things matter more.
Compassion grows deeper.
We recognize how fragile — and sacred — it all is.

Sometimes, it's grief that teaches us what love really means.

🕊️ If You Don't Believe in Anything Right Now

That's okay too.
If you can't find God, call it Hope.
If you can't find Hope, call it Light.
If you can't find Light, call it Love.

Whatever you call it — it's still there.
Even in the dark, even when you feel completely alone, something greater than you has carried you this far.

And that something will keep carrying you — even when you don't have the strength to take the next step.

✨ Rebuilding Your Connection

As you heal, you might notice your spirituality changing.
You may start seeing signs, dreams, or coincidences that remind you of your loved ones.

You might feel drawn to nature, music, or quiet prayer.
You might cry in a sunrise, or find peace in helping someone else.

That's your spirit reconnecting — not necessarily with religion, but with *meaning*.
Grief doesn't destroy faith; it reshapes it.

🪞 Reflection

Faith after loss rarely looks the same as before — but maybe that's the point.
Maybe the version you're growing into is deeper, softer, and more honest.
Maybe this new kind of faith is built not on certainty, but on surrender.

You don't have to have all the answers.
You just have to keep your heart open to peace — however it finds you.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. How has grief changed or challenged your spiritual beliefs?
2. When have you felt most connected to something greater than yourself?
3. If you could ask your Higher Power one honest question right now, what would it be?
4. What gives you even the smallest sense of peace when nothing else makes sense?

💭 Affirmation

"Even when I don't understand, I choose to believe in something greater than my pain. I open my heart to faith, to hope, and to the quiet peace that meets me in the mystery."

🕯️ Chapter 7: Holding Space for the Unfixable

“Some things cannot be fixed. They can only be carried.” – Megan Devine

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💭 The Instinct to Fix Pain

When someone we love is hurting, our natural instinct is to make it better.
We want to say the right thing, do the right thing, or find a solution to ease their suffering.
But grief doesn’t work that way — not for others, and not for ourselves.

You can’t fix grief because it’s not a problem to solve — it’s an experience to move *through*. And I’ll be honest — that’s hard for those of us who like control (raises hand 🙋‍♀️). We want to *help,* but sometimes the most healing thing we can do is to stop *trying* to help and simply *be there*.

That’s what “holding space” really means: being present without judgment, without advice, and without the need to change what is.

🌧️ Holding Space for Yourself

Before we can hold space for others, we have to learn how to do it for ourselves.

We live in a world that tells us to “stay strong,” “get over it,” or “move on.” But strength isn’t about pushing through the pain — it’s about giving yourself permission to feel it safely.

Holding space for yourself looks like this:

- Allowing the tears to come without apology.
- Taking time alone without feeling guilty.
- Admitting when you’re not okay.
- Sitting in silence when words won’t come.
- Reminding yourself that healing is not linear.

When you hold space for your own grief, you create a gentle container for your heart to heal — not through perfection, but through presence.

🕊️ Holding Space for Others

When someone else is grieving, it can feel awkward or uncomfortable. We want to say something comforting — but there really aren't magic words.
What matters most is *showing up*.

Sometimes that means sitting quietly beside them.
Sometimes it's making coffee, folding laundry, or just being a steady presence.
Sometimes it's saying, "I don't have words, but I'm here."

You don't need to fix their pain — you just need to make sure they don't face it alone.

The same goes for you: when people show up for *you,* let them. Don't rob others of the gift of giving support because you think you have to be strong.

We heal in connection — not isolation.

💬 What Not to Say (and Why)

It's okay to not know what to say, but here's a little guidance:

❌ "Everything happens for a reason."
👉 In grief, that feels dismissive. Sometimes, things just hurt — and that's reason enough.

❌ "They're in a better place."
👉 That might be true spiritually, but your heart still misses them here.

❌ "At least you had time to say goodbye."
👉 There's no *at least* in grief. Every loss is devastating in its own way.

✅ Instead, try:

- "This must be so hard."
- "I'm here with you."
- "You don't have to say anything. I just want to sit with you."

Empathy heals what explanations can't.

🌺 The Power of Presence

One of the greatest gifts we can give ourselves or someone else in grief is presence.
Presence says, “I see you.”
It says, “You matter.”
It says, “You don’t have to walk this road alone.”

When we hold space for pain instead of trying to fix it, we create safety — and in that safety, healing begins to unfold naturally.

We stop demanding answers and start allowing peace.

🪞 Reflection

Think about a time when someone simply *showed up* for you — no advice, no fixing, just presence. How did it make you feel?
Now, think of how you might offer that same presence to yourself or to someone else who’s grieving.

We don’t need to have all the answers. We just need to keep showing up with love.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. When you’re in pain, what kind of support feels most healing for you?
2. How can you hold space for yourself when you’re struggling?
3. Who in your life needs you to simply be there — without fixing, without judgment?
4. What do you wish someone had said (or not said) when you were grieving?

💬 Affirmation

“I don’t have to fix the pain — I just have to feel it. Healing begins when I make space for what is real, without rushing, judging, or turning away.”

🌷 Chapter 8: The Seasons of Healing

“Healing doesn’t mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.” – Unknown

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🌦️ Grief Has Seasons

Just like nature, our grief moves in seasons.
There’s the winter of numbness, when everything feels frozen.
The spring of tentative hope, when life begins to stir again.
The summer of laughter and light, when joy surprises us.
And the autumn of reflection, when we see how far we’ve come.

Grief doesn’t vanish — it transforms. It changes shape.
Some seasons are quiet, others stormy.
But each one serves a purpose in our healing.

The key is to stop judging yourself for where you are.
Winter isn’t bad, and summer isn’t proof you’re “over it.”
They’re both part of the same sacred cycle — love finding new ways to live.

💞 Healing Isn’t Linear

I wish I could tell you there’s a straight path through grief, but that’s just not real life.
You might wake up one morning feeling peaceful — then break down the next day over a song on the radio.
You might think you’ve healed, only to be surprised by another wave months or years later.

That doesn’t mean you’ve gone backward.
It means your heart is still healing in layers.

Healing isn’t about *never feeling sad again*. It’s about being able to feel joy and pain in the same breath — and knowing both belong.

🌻 The Return of Joy (Without Guilt)

One of the hardest things for many people is feeling happy again after deep loss.
We catch ourselves laughing and think, *“I shouldn’t be smiling. How can I enjoy anything when they’re gone?”*

But joy doesn't dishonor your grief — it honors your love.
Every time you laugh, every time you notice beauty, every time you allow yourself to live — you're saying, *"Their love still lives in me."*

It's okay to dance again.
It's okay to decorate for the holidays, to sing, to plan, to love.
You're not betraying your loss — you're carrying it forward with grace.

🌈 Gratitude as a Bridge

As healing unfolds, gratitude becomes a quiet bridge between what was and what is.
It doesn't mean you're grateful *for* the loss — it means you're grateful for what the love taught you.

You might start noticing small moments:

🌞 Sunlight on your face.

🐓 A bird singing outside your window.

💭 A memory that makes you smile instead of cry.

Those moments are signs that your heart is healing — gently, naturally, and in its own time.

🌻 Reconnecting with Life

There comes a time when you realize life didn't stop — it just changed.
And somehow, so did you.

You may find yourself reaching out more, helping others, or finding purpose in the very places you were once broken.
You may even discover that your loss has deepened your capacity to love, to forgive, and to understand others' pain.

This is the beauty of healing — we don't return to who we were; we grow into who we were always meant to be.

🪞 Reflection

Think of your healing like a garden.
You've planted seeds of hope in soil watered by tears.
Now, little by little, things are growing — maybe not all at once, maybe not how you expected, but growth is happening.

You don't have to force the seasons. Just tend to your heart with patience, and let time and love do their work.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. Which "season" of healing do you feel like you're in right now — winter, spring, summer, or autumn?
2. What signs of healing have quietly appeared in your life, even if they're small?
3. What memories bring you both tears *and* gratitude?
4. How can you begin allowing more joy without feeling guilty?

💬 Affirmation

"I honor the seasons of my healing. I trust that each phase — the quiet, the pain, the joy — is sacred. My heart is learning to live, love, and bloom again, one season at a time."

🌷 Chapter 9: Transforming Pain into Purpose

“Out of our greatest heartbreaks often come our greatest callings.” – Unknown

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💭 The Miracle Hidden in the Mess

If someone had told you during your darkest season that one day your pain would help someone else, you probably would’ve said, “Yeah right.”
Because when grief is fresh, purpose feels impossible.

But healing has a strange and beautiful way of using what once broke us to make us stronger, wiser, and more compassionate.
Pain doesn’t mean your story is over — it means your story is being rewritten with purpose.

Every tear you’ve cried has watered a seed in someone else’s garden.
Every scar you carry can become a roadmap for someone still lost in the storm.

🌈 From Surviving to Serving

At some point in the healing journey, something shifts.
We move from asking, “Why did this happen to me?”
to whispering, “Maybe this happened *for* something.”

That doesn’t mean we’re grateful for the pain — it means we’re using it for good.

You might find yourself drawn to help others who are struggling.
You might start writing, speaking, creating, mentoring, or simply listening to someone who’s where you once were.
That’s not coincidence — that’s *calling*.

Turning pain into purpose doesn’t erase the loss — it redeems it.

🌿 What Purpose Really Means

Purpose doesn’t have to be huge or public.
It doesn’t always look like starting an organization, writing a book, or changing the world.
Sometimes, purpose is just showing up with kindness.
It’s smiling at someone who looks like they’ve been crying.

It’s telling your story so someone else feels less alone.
It’s being present, honest, and real — because that’s what the world needs most.

Your purpose might grow from your loss, but it doesn’t end there.
It becomes the way you live, love, and give.

🕯️ The Alchemy of Healing

Grief changes us. But when we surrender to it instead of fighting it, something sacred happens — transformation.

The heart that once shattered becomes more open.
The compassion that once felt impossible becomes your second language.
You start seeing beauty in unlikely places — in resilience, in vulnerability, in the courage to keep going.

That’s the alchemy of healing: pain turns to wisdom, sorrow turns to strength, wounds turn to witness.

💫 Living for Those We’ve Lost

For many of us, purpose comes from honoring those we’ve lost.
We start living *for* them — carrying their love forward through our actions, our words, our giving.

Every time you choose kindness over bitterness, forgiveness over anger, or hope over despair — you keep their light alive.

Your life becomes the legacy of their love.

🌤️ Your Story Matters

Never underestimate the power of your story.
You don’t have to be perfect to inspire others — you just have to be *real*.

When you share your truth — even the messy, unfinished parts — you give others permission to do the same.
You become a walking testimony that healing is possible, that peace is real, that light can grow even in the ruins.

So don’t hide your story — *use it*.
That’s how pain becomes purpose.

🪞 Reflection

Think about how your journey has changed you.
What have you learned? Who have you become?
And how can those lessons serve others — even in small ways?

You’ve already survived the unthinkable. Now it’s time to *create* from it.

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What wisdom has your grief taught you that you could share with others?
2. How have your losses deepened your empathy or compassion?
3. In what ways could you honor your loved one or your past through acts of service, creativity, or kindness?
4. If your pain had a purpose, what do you think it might be teaching you right now?

💬 Affirmation

“My story matters. My pain has meaning. I am turning what once broke me into a bridge for others. From my suffering comes strength, and from my loss comes light.”

🌅 Chapter 10: Finding Peace After Pain

“Peace doesn’t mean the pain is gone. It means we’ve learned to live alongside it.” – Unknown

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💭 What Peace Really Looks Like

Peace after pain isn’t loud. It doesn’t announce itself with trumpets or fireworks.
It’s quiet. Subtle. Gentle.
It shows up in the moments you least expect — a soft sunrise, a deep breath, a sudden sense of calm where there used to be chaos.

It’s not that you stop missing the person, the past, or the version of yourself you lost.
It’s that you’ve learned how to live again *without losing them entirely.*
They become part of you — woven into your laughter, your choices, your compassion, your story.

That’s peace: when the love stays, even after the pain shifts.

🌿 Acceptance, Not Forgetting

Acceptance doesn’t mean you’re okay with what happened — it means you’ve made peace with what *is*.
You can stop fighting reality and start flowing with it.
You can stop wishing for “how things used to be” and start seeing beauty in what still remains.

You’ll always carry your loss with you, but it becomes lighter over time — not because the love fades, but because your heart grows stronger around it.

The pain doesn’t own you anymore.
You’ve learned to carry it, and even to let it teach you.

🌈 Integrating the Journey

Everything you’ve faced — the tears, the anger, the confusion, the surrender — has shaped who you are today.
You’re not the same person who started this journey, and that’s a beautiful thing.

You've learned that healing isn't about going back to who you were; it's about becoming someone softer, wiser, and more compassionate because of what you've lived through. You've turned pain into purpose, sorrow into strength, and loss into love.

That's transformation. That's recovery. That's grace.

💞 The Gift of Peace

There comes a day when you realize the ache has softened.
You'll catch yourself smiling at a memory instead of crying.
You'll feel joy without guilt.
You'll breathe deeper.

Peace doesn't erase the story — it completes it.

It's the quiet knowing that even in loss, life is still worth living.
It's the moment you realize you survived what you thought would break you — and somehow, you're still standing, still healing, still becoming.

🕊️ Dear Grieving Heart

(A Letter from Kathy)

Dear Grieving Heart,

If you've made it this far, I want you to stop and take a deep breath.

You've walked through shadows most people can't imagine. You've cried until you couldn't breathe, and yet — here you are.
Still showing up. Still seeking healing. Still choosing life.

That alone makes you brave.

Grief changes everything, but it also reveals who we are at our core.
It shows us how deep love really runs, how resilient the human heart can be, and how much grace it takes to keep going when everything inside of you wants to give up.

I know the pain doesn't vanish overnight. I know there are days it still sneaks up on you. But please remember: healing doesn't mean forgetting. It means learning to carry love and loss together — in balance, in truth, in peace.

You have honored what you lost by living again.
And that is one of the most sacred things a person can do.

So when you look in the mirror, I hope you see someone who fought their way through the storm and still found light.
Someone who dared to believe in hope again.
Someone who found peace after pain.

With love,
Kathy Simmons
Certified Recovery Coach, Author & Survivor
💜 *There is life on the other side of rock bottom — and peace after pain.*

✍️ Journal Prompts

1. What does peace look and feel like for you right now?
2. What lessons or truths from your grief journey do you want to carry forward?
3. Who or what do you feel ready to forgive — including yourself?
4. How will you honor your healing and the people or moments that shaped it?

💬 Affirmation

“Peace doesn’t mean my story has no pain — it means I’ve made peace with it. I carry my losses with love, my memories with gratitude, and my heart with grace. I have found peace after pain.”

🌻 Afterword: A Note from the Author

Dear Friend,

If you've made it to this page, I want you to know how proud I am of you.
Not because you read a book — but because you *showed up* for your healing.

You didn't avoid the pain. You faced it. You wrestled with it. You wrote it down. You prayed through it. You cried and kept going anyway. That takes courage most people never find.

Grief isn't something we "get over." It's something we learn to live with — and through that process, we discover parts of ourselves we never knew existed.
Strength. Compassion. Depth. Faith.
And most of all — peace.

I hope this workbook has helped you see that grief is not the end of your story.
It's a sacred chapter that, when honored, leads you into a life that's deeper, gentler, and more meaningful than before.

Every page you've written is a testimony of survival.
Every tear you've shed is a seed of growth.
Every small act of courage — every breath you've taken when it hurt to breathe — is proof that there is life on the other side of loss.

So keep walking. Keep healing. Keep believing that something beautiful can still grow from the ashes.
You are living proof that peace is possible.

With love,
Kathy Simmons
💜 *There is life on the other side of rock bottom — and peace after pain.*

🌿 Ways to Continue Healing

Your journey doesn't end here. Healing is a lifelong process, and there are many gentle ways to keep tending to your heart. Here are some you might consider:

✨ 1. Keep Writing

Continue journaling — not just about your grief, but about your hopes, dreams, and daily gratitude. Writing helps you stay connected to yourself and track your growth.

💐 2. Find Connection

Healing happens best in community. Join a grief group, attend a recovery meeting, or surround yourself with people who understand what it means to walk through pain with courage.

🌤️ 3. Serve Others

When you feel ready, share your story. Volunteer. Mentor. Be the light you once needed. Purpose gives meaning to pain.

💞 4. Create New Rituals

Light a candle for your loved one. Visit their favorite place. Cook their favorite meal. Celebrate their memory in ways that feel healing.

🕊️ 5. Lean on Your Higher Power

Whatever your faith or spiritual path looks like, stay connected to it. Prayer, meditation, nature, music — whatever brings you closer to peace, make it a regular part of your life.

💌 From My Heart to Yours

Grief will still visit from time to time — that's how love reminds us it was real.
But now, you have the tools to meet it with grace.

When those waves come, remember this:
You've been here before. You know how to breathe through it. You know how to find peace again.

And if you ever forget — come back to these pages. They'll remind you who you are and how far you've come.

With hope and healing,
Kathy 💜

🌎 Resources & Support

You don’t have to walk this path alone.

Whether you’re grieving a loved one, a loss of self, or a life that no longer looks the same, there are people and places ready to support you with compassion and understanding.

Below are some trusted organizations, hotlines, and tools to help you continue your healing journey.

💜 Grief Support & Counseling

🌷 GriefShare
Support groups and online resources for those grieving a loss.
🔗 www.griefshare.org

🌿 The Compassionate Friends
For families grieving the loss of a child, sibling, or grandchild.
🔗 www.compassionatefriends.org

🌸 What’s Your Grief
Educational tools, podcasts, and articles for every kind of loss.
🔗 www.whatsyourgrief.com

🕊️ The Dougy Center
Resources for grieving children, teens, and families.
🔗 www.dougy.org

💫 Option B
A community created to help build resilience after loss or adversity.
🔗 www.optionb.org

🌈 Crisis & Emotional Support

📞 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (U.S.)
Call or text **988** — 24/7, free, and confidential support for anyone in emotional distress.
🔗 988lifeline.org

💬 Crisis Text Line
Text **HOME** to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7.
🔗 www.crisistextline.org

🏥 SAMHSA National Helpline
For mental health or substance use support: **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**
🔗 www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

🤝 NAMI Helpline (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
Support for individuals and families dealing with mental health challenges.
Call **1-800-950-NAMI (6264)** or text **HELPLINE** to 62640.
🔗 www.nami.org/help

🌟 Faith & Spiritual Healing

🙏 The Center for Loss & Life Transition
Faith-friendly guidance and education by Dr. Alan Wolfelt, renowned grief counselor and author.
🔗 www.centerforloss.com

📖 Daily Devotions for the Grieving Heart
Free daily email or app devotions designed to bring comfort and spiritual peace.
🔗 www.griefshare.org/mygriedemo/devotions

💗 Books & Journals for Continued Healing

- *It's OK That You're Not OK* by Megan Devine
- *The Body Keeps the Score* by Bessel van der Kolk
- *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* by Harold S. Kushner
- *A Grief Observed* by C.S. Lewis

- *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy* by Sheryl Sandberg and Adam Grant
- *Healing After Loss: Daily Meditations for Working Through Grief* by Martha Whitmore Hickman

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💞 Community & Connection

🌻 The Other Side of Rock Bottom

Created by **Kathy Simmons** — a welcoming, recovery-based community that embraces *all* pathways of healing.
Join the conversation, attend meetings, and find encouragement daily:

📍 Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/theothersideofrockbottom

📺 YouTube: @theothersideofrockbottom

🌐 Website: www.theothersideofrockbottom.org

🕊️ OSRB Zoom Meetings

Join daily meetings at 8 a.m., 2 p.m., and 8 p.m. ET.

🔗 https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83119982784?pwd=vmbuLfhdiLo46yTo40HKZELnOF5lhX.1

Meeting ID: 831 1998 2784

Password: recovery (all lower case)

🌺 Remember

You don't have to heal perfectly. You just have to keep showing up — one breath, one step, one page at a time.
Peace doesn't erase pain. It simply reminds you that you're strong enough to live again, love again, and believe again.

With love,
Kathy Simmons
💜 *There is life on the other side of rock bottom — and peace after pain.*