

THE FUTURE THAT CHANGED

Grieving the Hopes, Dreams, and Moments You Imagined

Hope | Longing | Identity | Love

When a child dies, it is not only their life that is lost. Parents may also grieve the future they imagined: birthdays, school years, friendships, graduations, holidays, careers, marriage, children, or simply the ordinary days still to come. These hopes may return in tender moments or as your child's age would have changed. Grieving an altered future is a real and meaningful part of child loss. You are allowed to hold both the dreams you had and the love that remains.

The future you imagined mattered because your child mattered.

1 THE DREAMS YOU HELD

- You may grieve all the things you imagined for your child.
- These dreams were part of your love and hope.
- Their loss can make the future feel unfamiliar.
- Your dreams deserve to be mourned, too.

2 AGING WITHOUT THEM

- Birthdays and the passing years may bring new waves of longing.
- You may think about the age they would be now.
- Each year can hold a different kind of absence.
- There is no right way to carry this ache.

3 MILESTONES THAT HURT

- School events, graduations, weddings, and holidays may feel changed.
- You may notice the moments you expected them to have.
- Joy for others can bring a quiet pain of your own.
- Both love and sorrow can have a place.

4 THE CHANGED FAMILY STORY

- You may feel the absence of the role they would have held.
- Family traditions and gatherings can look different now.
- You may wonder how life would have unfolded.
- These questions are part of a love that continues.

5 WHEN OTHERS MOVE FORWARD

- The world may seem to keep moving while you carry the loss.
- Friends or family may not understand what still hurts.
- You do not have to "be over" your child's death.
- Your grief moves at its own pace.

6 MAKING ROOM FOR WHAT IS

- You can live in the life you have without erasing the life you imagined.
- New meaning does not replace what was lost.
- You are allowed to hold both reality and longing.
- Gentleness can help you face each day.

7 KEEPING THEM INCLUDED

- Speak their name when you talk about your family's future.
- Include them in stories, rituals, or meaningful dates.
- Their place in your family does not disappear.
- Love can remain part of every chapter.

8 HOPE LOOKS DIFFERENT

- Hope may become smaller, quieter, and more personal over time.
- It can be found in love, memory, and moments of connection.
- Hope does not mean forgetting or moving on.
- It can grow beside grief.

A GENTLE REMINDER

You can grieve the future you imagined while carrying the love that remains.

