

WHAT NOW?

So, you've been attending a support group for two months. What were your expectations?

Some entered this experience with hopes that something would happen which would make the pain go all away. Others suspected that the support group would not be a magic pill, yet it might help. Some had no defined expectations, just knew inside that they needed to do some-thing, and this was here to do.

Early on, we learned that this is griefwork, with an emphasis on **work**. Take a measurement of where you are in the reconciliation process. This may help to focus your energies as you continue your work outside the support group.

- We learned to effectively experience and express outside ourselves the reality of the death. For many, this group was the first opportunity to do this. For others, it was a continuation and reinforcement of what was started elsewhere. It is necessary to continue the process of outside expression of our feelings, whether that be talking regularly to others, writing in our journals, or any other form of outside expression.
- We have learned to allow ourselves to embrace the pain of the loss while learning how to nurture ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. Over and over we heard that the only way **out** is **through**. When I am in a safe place, I will permit my feelings to surface and be experienced. Stifling the pain prolongs the agony. This is also a time for learning or relearning how to care for our physical, emotional, and spiritual selves.
- We are learning how to convert our relationship with the person who died from an interactive presence to one of appropriate memory. This is a process which can't be deliberately willed. We have learned to just make a mental note of it as something which is in the process of happening at a subconscious level, and to allow our subconscious to do its work without interference.
- We are learning how to develop a new self-identity based on a life without the person who died. Each person's journey is different, and our individual timing is unique. Each day, some experience takes place which continues to build our new self-identity. For some who had a deeply enmeshed relationship, this may be a difficult task. It isn't a sign of weakness to seek professional help.

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- We've begun to relate the experience of the death to a context of new meaning in our lives. For many, death provokes questions regarding the meaning of life and its transitory nature. There are no universal answers to many of these questions, however the process of seeking them often brings a meaningful answer to each of us. I will allow myself time for my own discovery of meaning. I won't permit others to rush me with their pat conclusions.
 - I am developing a lasting network of support to help me through the process. This group was a useful step toward learning to establish lasting support. Through our emphasis on phone calls and networking, it reinforced my ability to reach out. Sometimes this was easy, other times it wasn't. I will keep trying because I know that continuing to reach out will help my reconciliation timetable. I will find it also causes other miracles in the world. I will try to notice them when they occur.