

Grief Notes

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Ever-Changing Life After A Death by Tim Soucy, Bereavement Coordinator

For most of my life, I have heard the saying, “The only sure things in life are death and taxes.” Yet another certainty is change. Throughout life, we experience change for myriad reasons. Think about how dramatically technology, travel, commerce, education, and medical advancements have changed in our lifetime. However, few things can change the trajectory of our lives like the death of a loved one. The intensity and complexity of these changes will vary as much as one’s own grief journey. This article will focus on practical day-to-day routine changes and possible ways to cope with them.

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One significant change after the death of a loved one may be financial. A household may shift from two incomes to one, which can affect a person’s ability to stay in their home and afford necessities such as food, medicine, utilities, and transportation.

Depending on the situation, these changes may require difficult decisions, such as:

- Selling a home
- Moving in with family or friends
- Relocating to a care facility
- Finding a more affordable place to live

For others, financial concerns may be minimal. If these decisions feel overwhelming, speaking with trusted family members or friends may help. County and state agencies may also provide guidance, resources, or assistance.

Preparing meals and grocery shopping after the death of a loved one can bring unexpected changes to daily life. A grocery list that once reflected shared preferences may suddenly feel unfamiliar, and shopping can become emotionally difficult. Simple moments—such as walking past a favorite soft drink brand, seeing a familiar snack, or continuing to buy cookies your loved one enjoyed—can bring up memories and strong emotions. These reactions are common and may arise when least expected. Preparing meals for one after years of cooking for two or more can also feel like a major adjustment. If shopping or cooking feels overwhelming, consider asking a trusted family member, friend, or neighbor to go with you or help prepare meals. Having support can make these routine tasks feel less difficult.

After the death of a loved one, you may notice changes in your sense of identity and in the things that once gave your life meaning and purpose.

This can be especially true if you were a primary caregiver. Over time, caregiving may have become central to how you understand yourself. It may have shaped your daily routine, your relationships, and your sense of purpose. The longer you provided care, the more deeply that role may have become woven into your identity. When that caregiving role ends, it is common to feel unsettled or unsure of who you are in this new season of life. This does not diminish the care you gave; it reflects how meaningful that role was. With time, support, and meaningful relationships, that unsettled feeling can ease, and a renewed sense of personhood can gradually return.

These are just three of the countless changes you may face after the death of a loved one. The goal is not to list every possible change, but to acknowledge how many parts of daily life can shift and to remind you that you have already moved through many changes in your life. Coping with these changes can feel overwhelming, confusing, and disorienting. You do not have to face them alone. Your bereavement coordinator is available to support you. Please consider reaching out when you need guidance, reassurance, or someone to listen.