

Finding Your Values After Loss

A four-column exercise for a time of grief

Grief follows more than a death. When a marriage ends, a friendship breaks, or a working life is taken away, the loss strikes at our sense of who we are. The vision we held for our life and the purpose that went with it can be thrown into the air.

Identity stands, as it were, on a three-legged stool: a vision, a sense of purpose, and a set of fundamental values. When the first two are shaken, the third often holds, and may even have grown clearer. Our values hold the world still while everything else is storm. They are the compass by which we read the map of the road ahead.

This exercise is a way of finding that compass.

How to use the worksheet

1. In the first column, write as fully as you wish how you believe you should treat other people. There is no need for a list of saintly virtues. Write what you truly believe.
2. In the second column, write how you believe you should be treated by others.
3. In the third column, describe how you want to show up in the world: the character of the life you want to live, whatever pain or paralysis you may feel at present.
4. Read the first three columns slowly. From them, distil a short list of words that name your core values, such as trustworthiness, honesty or courage. Write these in the fourth column.

Take your time. You may wish to return to the columns over several days, or to draw them in your own journal if you prefer.

You do not need to have lived a saintly and blameless life to know the values to which you wish to aspire. Grief has exacted its price from you already. Getting clear about who you are, and who you want to be, is how something of value may be taken from what has been paid.

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Name _____ Date _____

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