

Poetry, Music, Flowers, and Everlasting Memories

A seven-day journey in grief, hope, and healing
- By Jonathan Tang

Introduction

Grief, is a lifelong journey. It's an ebb and flow, so viscerally felt one day, hopelessly numb the other day, and speckled with joy in another day. In my journey with grief, and losing my father to cancer at the age of 16, healing does not come all at once- and happiness comes in brief moments of joy and celebration. And that's my inspiration for creating this guide- one that dedicates a week to remembering and celebrating the life of a loved one, rooted in the qualities that make us human- food, community, and stories.

Everyone grieves differently, and no one's story or circumstance is the same. This is simply meant as a way to take that journey into a week. To celebrate life for what it is- a brief speck in the infinite universe that's infinitely meaningful because of our memories. May this journey be one of deep hope and restoration.

- Jonathan Tang

"May the peace that comes from the memories of love shared, comfort you now and in the days ahead" -unknown

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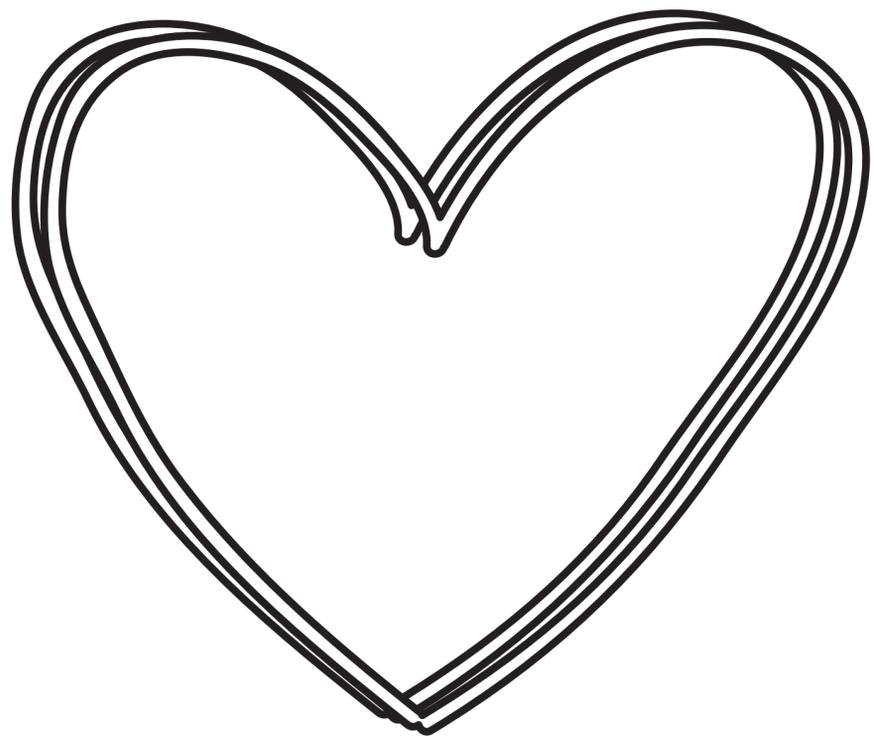
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Day 1- A story from a loved one



*“How lucky I am to have someone who makes saying goodbye to so hard”
-Winnie the Pooh*

Ask a family member or a friend what their favorite memory is of the one who's passed away—talk about happiness, sadness, laughter, sorrow. Talk about the kindness you shared, the love you shared. I hope that in this exercise you can find that the memory of your loved one lives beyond yourself, and in those around you. May you anchor yourself to friends and family during this journey, knowing that you are not alone.

Day 2- Favorite Piece of Music



"It's funny how a melody sounds oftentimes like a memory." -Anonymous

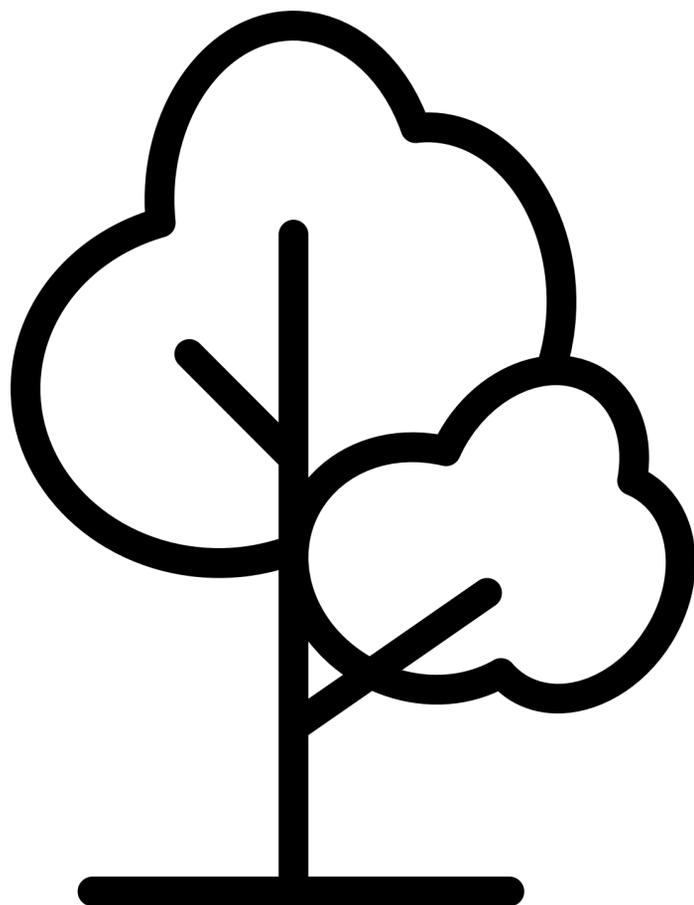
Listen to your loved ones' favorite tune, or, play a song you've always wished you shared. Let the lyrics and the melody be a love letter to the ones you lost. You can also try to play that song yourself! My dad's favorite band was the Beatles, and so I've been learning *Hey Jude* on my guitar—easier said than done! But may the music shared be a reminder of memories you can hold on to forever, like a good tune that never seems to fade away.

Day 3- Three Haikus

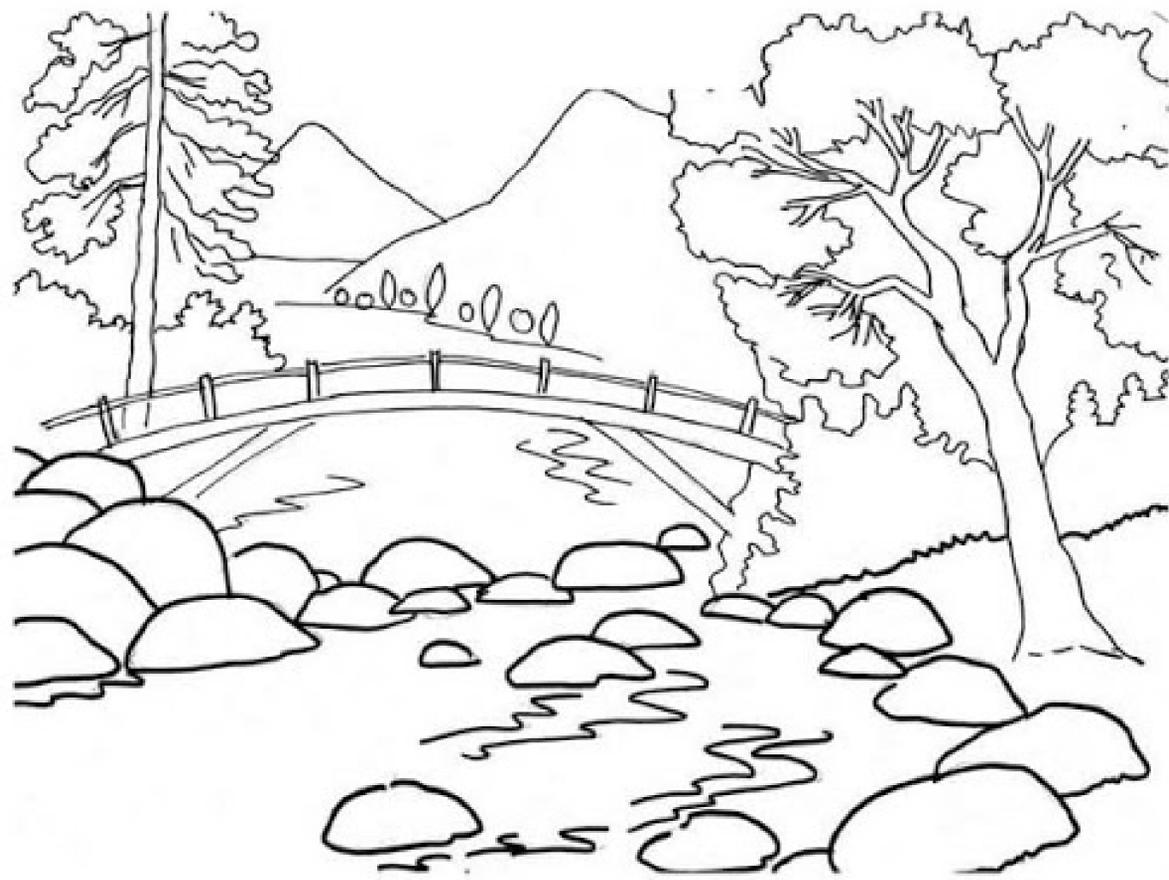
"Even with Distance

*The world feels painfully close
But Hope turns the page" - Colin Dwyer*

Haikus (5, 7, 5, syllable pattern) are a way of capturing a moment in time, or profoundly sum up a lifetime of memories. Write three haikus remembering your time with your loved one- or the time you wished you had. May these short haikus capture, in its own personal way, the complexity of love and grief.



Day 4- Nature as Healing



*“Flowers are love’s truest language”
- Park Benjamin*

Take pictures of flowers or plants that your loved one planted- or go to a park and take pictures of plants you'd like to show your loved one. Identify and learn about those plants, grounding yourself in knowing that life is both about loss, memory, and growth once again.

Day 5- Poem of Grief

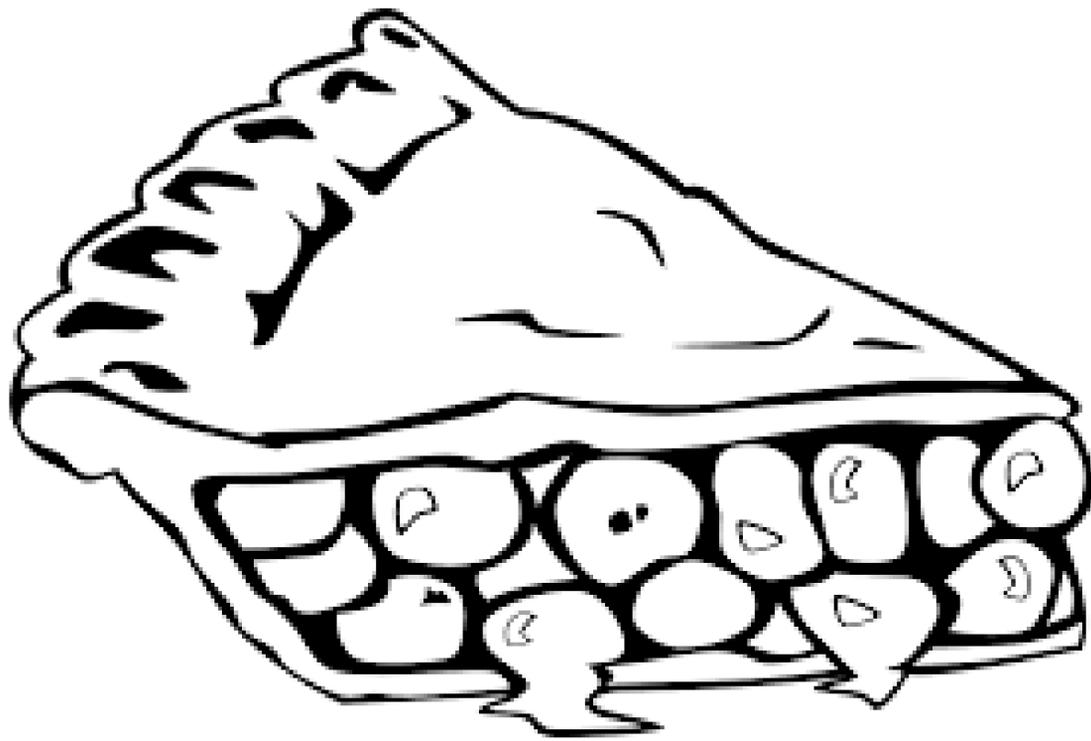


*"What is Grief, but love persevering?"
- Laura Donney*

Write a poem with your honest feelings, letting any anger, pain, longing, flow onto the paper.

With a loved and trusted friend, give yourself permission to feel emotions that you've pushed away- but only to the extent that you're comfortable with. Give yourself the day to heal, remember happy memories, and seek any help that you need.

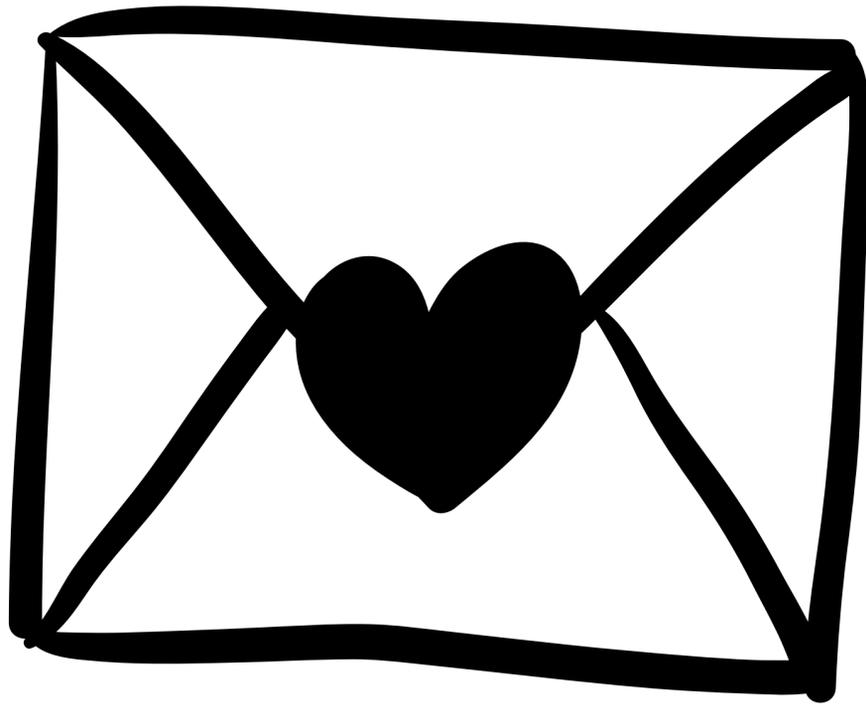
Day 6- Recipes of love



"Food is love when words are inadequate"
- Alan D. Wolfelt

Make your loved ones' favorite recipe with family and/or friends. The recipe can either be their own, or of their favorite food. If cooking's not your forte, you can order from their favorite restaurant. May the food be nourishing and healing, and communicate any feelings of loss and nostalgia to loved ones.

Day 1- Write a Letter



"To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die" - Thomas Campbell

Write a letter to your loved one, updating them on your life, saying anything and everything. If this is healing and restorative, it can be a practice done weekly. Knowing full and well that they're still very much here. Lean into your family, friends, community, and faith, as you honor and remember your loved one, celebrating who they are in your life.

Conclusion



"There will come a day - I promise you, when the thought of your loved one brings a smile to your lips before it brings a tear to your eye," - Pres. Joe Biden

My hope is that in this journey, you're brought a bit closer to the wonderful stories of life, the power of memories, and the emotions you may have stowed away. That those memories bring you joy and hope, even in the midst of sorrow. Knowing that healing is a lifelong process- and love everlasting is perhaps the most powerful way we can remember and heal.

Acknowledgments and Gratitude

- To Mom- thank you for always being my rock, for showing me what unconditional love looks like
- To Dad- thank you for being the best father anyone could've asked for, and for each day reminding me to be a better person because of the life you lived
- To Dr. Lauren Edwards and Dr. Bryant Lin- Thank you for the wonderful class that gave me the opportunity to create this personal project, and for inspiring and encouraging me to tell my story with joy.
- To Ms. Jacqueline Genovese- thank you for inspiring me to write a letter to my father and find hope in grief.
- To Julie, thanks for helping me identify those flowers!
- To my wonderful classmates- I cannot thank you enough for your support and unending inspiration