



THE AFTER A DEATH SERIES

When A Husband Dies

When Truman Baker died, his wife Lou looked at her sister and said, “I’m just one in a million. If other women can get through this, I can too.” She was right. There are millions of widows living with their husband’s memory.

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IT’S EMOTIONAL

As a woman, you were probably the family nurturer. You cared for others. Now it’s time to care for yourself because grief can be devastating. You’ll have all the feelings that come when someone you love dies:

- Sadness
- Anger
- Confusion
- Frustration
- Fear and Anxiety
- Loneliness
- Helplessness and hopelessness.

This is a time to let others care for you. Start a “job jar” with simple things people can do for you. When someone asks what they can do, tell them. Grief is not something you have to do alone. Almost everyone has trouble asking for help. Forget that. If you’re lonely, call around until someone can join you for lunch or dinner. Have something each week to look forward to and every day write down one thing that brings you comfort and one thing that brings your joy. Keep your lists in a journal where you can pour out your feelings and cover pages with tears if you need to.

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IT’S PHYSICAL

You’re also likely to have some physical difficulties:

- Insomnia or sleeping too much

- No appetite or needing to eat all the time
- Colds, flu, aches and pains and feeling no energy at times.

It’s a time to eat extra-nutritious food, get all the rest you need and drink a lot of water. When people cry they can become dehydrated. Move. Take your grief for a walk. Stretch. It’s easy to neglect yourself when you’re grieving. Make a conscious effort to be kind to YOU.

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IT’S CONFUSING

If you and your husband shared things such as bill paying, legal information and financial details, you’re a step ahead. If not, now is the time to have your banker or a financial consultant teach you about money affairs. As one widow said, “He paid the bills, he knew the stocks and I was left with a checkbook I didn’t understand.” No matter what it is you don’t understand, there is help out there and you can find it. Often your funeral director can direct you to knowledgeable people who will give you instructions and good advice.

This is also a time when you are the most vulnerable, that you have the most papers to fill out and the most details to take care of. The wisdom here is to *take your time*. While you need to get the papers in at the proper time, fill them out carefully, re-read them, double check for mistakes or attachments you may have left out.

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IT’S MANAGEABLE

You have an advantage as a grieving woman. In our culture, it’s the woman who can most easily talk to other women. You can find the support you

need, whether it’s your circle of friends, your family, your church or a support group. And support groups are helpful. Give one a try. Your funeral director is likely to have a list or know of groups near you. Remember, at a support group, you don’t have to talk if you don’t want to. You’ll hear how other grievers have dealt with their sorrow and you’ll be with people who understand. It’s not all grim, either. People in support groups laugh, enjoy each other and often form lifetime friendships. As one widow said, “When I first walked in I heard laughter and I thought, ‘How could they laugh when I feel so terrible?’ but somewhere in the back of my head I heard, ‘You’ll laugh someday, too.’ And I have.”

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IT TAKES TIME

Lucy’s husband died a good death. In fact, he was writing a note to say he loved her. They had said everything to each other they needed to say and after he died she found a deep, meaningful peace surrounding her. Then, on the third Christmas after he died, she had more tears than she expected. She called what she was experiencing, “TUGS” – Totally Unexpected Grievings. Her children couldn’t come home. She had decided to move to a retirement village, her best friend had moved away and when a cake she was baking for a gathering fell flat she broke into sobs.

It takes time, but it does get better. The single most important thing to remember is to live your life fully, cherish your memories and do what you need to do to be healthy and content. YOU make the decisions for what is best for you. You’re worth it.

A Caring Gift to you from: _____