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UNRAVELING GRIEF:
HISTORICAL MOURNING WEAR AND MODERN REINTERPRETATIONS

by

Sharon Carpenter

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Science in Fashion Business and Entrepreneurship
at
Lindenwood University

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the College of Art and Humanities
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Science in Fashion Business and Entrepreneurship
at
Lindenwood University

By

Sharon Caitlin Carpenter

Saint Charles, Missouri
October 2024

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Unraveling Grief: Historical Mourning Wear and Modern Reinterpretations

Sharon Carpenter, Master of Science in Fashion Business and Entrepreneurship, 2024

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Chajuana Trawick Ferguson, Endowed Chair and Associate Professor of Fashion Business & Design/DEI Task Force Faculty Co-Chair

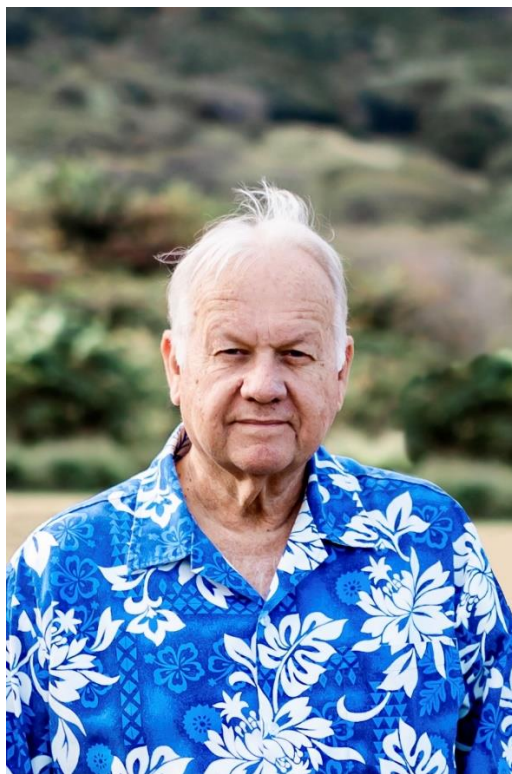
Fashion has played a significant role in mourning rituals throughout history, reflecting broader trends in attire and social status. Mourners in ancient times often wore specific garments imbued with symbolic meanings, such as purity or transition to the afterlife, reflecting cultural attitudes towards death and bereavement. Over time, these practices evolved, with different societies adopting specific colors and styles of clothing, such as black or dark garments, to signify mourning and express collective grief. This evolution of mourning attire demonstrates the interplay between fashion, social norms, and the human experience of loss.

Dedication

I am deeply grateful to my loving dad and devoted disciple of Jesus Christ, Warren Weber Sr. Who taught his children the comforting knowledge that we will see each other again. Dad, you have been my angel and my guide, inspiring me not only to continue my own education but also to educate and build disciples of Jesus Christ among others.

Your unwavering faith and love have shaped my journey, and your legacy of spiritual strength and dedication continues to inspire me every day. Thank you for instilling in me the values of faith, education, and service to others. Your life and teachings will forever be a beacon of light in my life and in the lives of those I reach.

Jesus Christ is “Pontifex”, i.e., building the bridge over the abyss of death. He is the only one who, by virtue of his incarnation and the paschal mystery, has the ability to reconnect the relationships between the dead and the living, broken down by death ([Müller 2022, pp. 311–12](#)).



Warren Paul Weber Sr. 1948-2022

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Introduction

In the fabric of human history, mourning rituals have woven threads of tradition, belief, and social expression across civilizations and eras. This thesis explores "Unraveling Grief: Historical Mourning Wear and Modern Reinterpretations," tracing the complicated role of fashion within mourning practices from ancient civilizations to the modern expressions of grief in societies. Fashion, beyond its aesthetic role, emerges as a powerful medium that not only reflects but also shapes cultural attitudes towards death and bereavement.

Working on my project has been an incredibly personal experience, helping me navigate my emotions and grief. The process of creating a quilt from my dad's work clothes is significant; each stitch and piece of fabric holds memories and emotions that allow me to process my grief in a tangible way. Using his work clothes in the quilt was a deliberate choice that carries emotional magnitude. These garments represented his hard work, dedication, and the essence of who he was. By incorporating them into my project, I maintain a connection with him, transforming ordinary items into a cherished keepsake that honors his memory.

We start in the sands of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, where funeral rites were elaborate displays of social observation and spiritual devotion. White linen's purity was used in Egypt to cover mourners in a symbolic shift that reflected beliefs in the continuity and holiness of the afterlife. Mesopotamian rituals honored the dead and appeased gods while acting as gateways to the underworld. These traditional customs show mourning as a heavenly communication in which clothes conveyed respect and community.

By the Middle Ages and onward, mourning clothes transcended private sorrow to become a political performance. This shift is illustrated by the funerals of Queens Madeleine de Valois and Margaret Tudor, who wielded mourning as a tool for statecraft and public consciousness. Queen

Victoria's deep sadness at Prince Albert's passing ingrained mourning into Victorian culture, where dark silks and crepe veils became standards of decency. This period saw the commercialization of grief and the standardization of mourning attire, turning grief into both a public display and a personal ritual.

The tumult of World War I shattered Victorian somberness, as practicality overtook tradition. Women entered the workforce in record numbers, challenging private mourning rituals with functional adjustments. Mourning evolved into an expression of resilience, blending personal grief with collective remembrance in the face of remarkable loss.

Contemporary mourning practices, as explored in recent literature, reveal a global textile of coping mechanisms. From culturally sensitive interventions to the artistry of memorial tattoos, modern grief transcends boundaries of tradition, embracing individuality. These expressions reflect a society grappling with mortality in an increasingly fragmented world, seeking solace in personalized rituals that honor both the departed and the living.

This project has taught me valuable lessons about loss and the grieving process. I realized how grief can overshadow other important tasks, affecting my ability to focus on academic and creative work. Reflecting on these moments has highlighted the need for balance and self-compassion during mourning. Despite the mistakes I made along the way, these missteps became integral to my growth, teaching me patience and the importance of seeking support.

By unraveling the threads of history, this thesis shows mourning attire as more than just fabric; it is a cultural artifact that bridges past and present, offering insight into how societies navigate loss, remembrance, and resilience. Through ancient rites, Victorian codes, wartime adaptations, and contemporary innovations, "The Expression of Grief Through Fashion: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices" invites reflection on the significance of mourning in

shaping our collective understanding of life's beauty and the bonds of memory. By sharing my story, I hope to inspire others to find their own ways of processing grief.

Literature Review

Overview

Fashion has played a significant role in mourning rituals throughout history, reflecting broader trends in attire and social status. Mourners in ancient times often wore specific garments imbued with symbolic meanings, such as purity or transition to the afterlife, reflecting cultural attitudes towards death and bereavement. Over time, these practices evolved, with different societies adopting specific colors and styles of clothing, such as black or dark garments, to signify mourning and express collective grief. This evolution of mourning attire highlights the interplay between fashion, social norms, and the human experience of loss.

Early Civilization

Mourning rituals have been intrinsic to human societies across civilizations and eras, offering structured frameworks for individuals and communities to navigate and express grief in response to death. These rituals encompass a diverse tapestry of traditions, symbols, and practices that evolve with cultural shifts while retaining core elements over time.

Ancient civilizations like Egypt and Mesopotamia established some of the earliest recorded mourning rituals, which offer profound insights into their cultural perspectives on life and death. In Egypt, mourning was intricately woven into the fabric of religious and social practices, reflecting a profound reverence for the afterlife. The Egyptians conducted elaborate funeral rites that included embalming and ritualized mourning involving priests and family members. These ceremonies were marked by intense wailing, symbolic gestures such as head shaving, and attire predominantly in white or linen, symbolizing purity, and the deceased's transition to the afterlife.

My quilt project draws on this tradition, as each piece of fabric from my dad's work clothes symbolizes a tangible connection to his life, much like the clothing worn by mourners in ancient Egypt.

The Egyptian worldview, as detailed in "*The Spirit of Ancient Egypt*," underscores their unique approach to life and death. According to Ruiz (2001), ancient Egyptians cherished life intensely, viewing it as a preparation for the eternal journey beyond death. They believed in an afterlife that was not just a continuation but an idealized version of their earthly existence. This belief system profoundly influenced their mourning rituals, which were designed not only to honor the deceased but also to facilitate their smooth passage into the next realm. Similarly, my quilt serves as a tribute that honors my father's memory while helping me process my grief, transforming everyday garments into a heartfelt representation of his life.

Mesopotamian mourning rituals, rooted in pragmatic and polytheistic beliefs, also held significant cultural and religious importance. They involved communal lamentation, offerings to the deceased, and rituals by priests to ensure safe passage into the underworld, appeasing various gods associated with death and the afterlife. Through my quilt, I invite family and friends to share in this personal act of remembrance, creating a communal space for lamentation and reflection that echoes these ancient practices.

The Old Testament provides understandings into evolving ideas about the afterlife among the Israelites, progressing from early vague notions to more defined concepts over time. Genesis 15:15 introduces initial ideas such as "going to be with their fathers," which later developed into more nuanced understandings influenced by subsequent revelations (Wegner, 2020). This gradual development reflects how ancient societies grappled with profound existential questions surrounding death, shaping their mourning rituals and spiritual beliefs accordingly. In my own

journey, I have found that creating the quilt has prompted deeper reflections on loss, healing, and the meaning of memory, echoing the evolving understandings of mourning found in these ancient texts.

Across ancient civilizations, including Egypt and Mesopotamia, mourning rituals not only honored the departed but also provided structured frameworks for comprehending life's mysteries and the transition to death. My quilt project embodies this idea by allowing me to navigate my grief through a creative process that intertwines personal memory with cultural practices. These diverse practices and evolving beliefs among the Israelites feature distinct cultural responses to the universal human experiences of loss and mortality, each deeply infused with unique spiritual and cultural perspectives. Through this project, I aim to honor not only my dad's memory but also the rituals that have shaped my understanding of grief and remembrance.

A Social and Political Change

Comparison with English, French, and Scottish traditions highlight a shared emphasis on mourning displays as political tools. These funerals demonstrate how mourning attire evolved to address specific political needs and reflect broader changes in societal and political structures during the sixteenth century. The evolution of mourning clothing during these events underscores its role in political discourse and diplomacy at key moments of change and loss.

The Scottish royal household's participation in mourning traditions from the late fifteenth century, in the funerals of Queens Madeleine de Valois (d. 1537) and Margaret Tudor (d. 1541), showcases how mourning dress was employed politically. These two funerals, close in time and managed by the same household, exhibited differences in mourning attire, reflecting the distinct political contexts each addressed.

Madeleine de Valois's funeral set a precedent in the scale and spectacle of mourning attire, marking a significant social shift and addressing ongoing relations between Scotland and France with an immediate, widespread impact. In contrast, Margaret Tudor's funeral, while less grand, featured prolonged and varied mourning within the royal household, emphasizing personal and dynastic implications (Nyman, 2021).

The funerals of Queens Madeleine de Valois and Margaret Tudor marked a shift towards institutionalizing mourning practices, transitioning the expression of grief from a personal and communal experience to a government-controlled timeline. The elaborate and politically charged use of mourning dress at these events exemplifies how the royal household began to standardize mourning displays to serve specific political purposes, thus intertwining public grief with statecraft. This transformation reflects a broader trend of using mourning as a tool for political messaging and control during significant moments of change and loss.

In my own heartache and process, I find parallels in how mourning can serve both personal and broader societal functions. Just as the royal households utilized mourning attire to navigate political landscapes, my quilt project acts as a personal and creative expression of my loss, reflecting my emotions while connecting with larger themes of memory and heritage. Each piece of fabric represents not just my personal grief but also a tribute to my dad's life, transforming sorrow into a narrative that can be shared and understood by others.

Queen Victoria's influence on mourning customs and fashion during the Victorian era was far-reaching. Building upon earlier traditions of formalized mourning dress that emerged in the sixteenth century, Victoria's personal example following the death of her husband, Prince Albert, in 1861 solidified mourning practices as a societal norm. Prior to Victoria's era, mourning attire was primarily functional, often a simple cape or hood worn to cover everyday clothing during

funeral processions. However, Victoria elevated mourning attire into a complex system of social and sartorial codes.

Victoria's mourning period, lasting for decades, set a precedent for the era. She wore black mourning attire exclusively, influencing women across Britain and beyond to adopt similar practices. This adherence to somber attire, complete with veils, bonnets, and black garments, signified not only personal grief but also adherence to social norms and respectability. Victoria's mourning rituals became a public spectacle, showcasing her personal sorrow while reinforcing mourning as a visible symbol of moral virtue and respect (Bedikian, 2008).

The act of creating my quilt is like the visible mourning practices popularized by Queen Victoria. Just as her public display of grief conveyed deep personal sorrow while adhering to societal expectations, my quilt serves as a personal manifestation of loss that honors my dad while inviting others into my journey of remembrance. This interplay between personal grief and cultural expressions of mourning highlights the continuing significance of how we choose to remember and honor those we've lost.

The Queen of Grief

Queen Victoria's deep grief over the death of her husband had a lasting impact on Victorian society, shaping enduring mourning customs that have persisted to this day. Her personal mourning, which extended throughout her life, not only taught deep sorrow but also established stringent standards for mourning practices among the upper and middle classes. This period formalized mourning attire with specific rules governing fabric choices, styles, and durations of wear. Fabrics such as black crepe and bombazine became prevalent in mourning garments, complemented by somber accessories like crape veils, which became essential elements of mourning fashion. The adoption of such attire was not solely a matter of tradition but also served

as a visible indicator of social status and wealth, with more elaborate garments reserved for those of higher standing.

This cultural shift towards formalized mourning attire also gave rise to a thriving industry focused on mourning fashion. Dressmakers, milliners, and textile manufacturers capitalized on the demand for specialized mourning fabrics and garments, catering to the specific needs of mourning individuals. The commercialization of mourning attire became a significant aspect of Victorian economy and society, reflecting broader societal attitudes towards death, grief, and remembrance.

Kim Kelly's (2015) article, "*Death Becomes Her: How Mourning is Having a Moment*," explores the contemporary resonance of Victorian mourning rituals. The article notes a resurgence of interest in mourning practices, exemplified by the appearance of sweeping black Victorian-inspired gowns at London Fashion Week. This resurgence reflects a modern fascination with death and its rituals, suggesting a societal yearning for structured mourning practices in an increasingly disconnected world.

Excavated textiles from the Non-Conformist and Baptist cemetery sites offer a glimpse into mourning practices among the poorer classes of Victorian London. While not directly influenced by Queen Victoria's personal mourning practices, these findings reflect broader societal norms and emotional responses to death during the Victorian era. They illustrate how individuals from different social backgrounds engaged in mourning rituals and expressed emotions related to loss and grief through their choices of burial garments (Davidson, 2016).

The enduring chicness of black attire today finds its roots in Victorian mourning customs, where black garments symbolized mourning and respect for the deceased. Kelly suggests that this revival of interest in Victorian mourning reflects a broader cultural exploration of grief and mortality, contrasting with modern society's often more private and abbreviated grieving

processes. The popularity of exhibitions like "*Death Becomes Her: A Century of Mourning Attire*" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art underscores this nostalgia for visible and ritualized expressions of grief, affiliated to Victorian practices.

In essence, Queen Victoria's personal experience of grief over the loss of Prince Albert evolved into a foundational set of mourning customs that continue to provide a outline for expressing sorrow and honoring the departed in contemporary society. Her adoption of black mourning attire and the associated rituals not only became cultural norms but also influenced how many navigate the complex emotions surrounding death and mourning today. The convergence of historical insights and contemporary reflections highlights mourning attire as both a personal expression of grief and a cultural artifact that bridges past and present perceptions of loss and remembrance.

I recognize parallels with Queen Victoria's mourning practices. Just as her choices in mourning attire were deeply personal yet influential in shaping societal norms, my quilt serves as both a personal tribute and a way to engage with the broader cultural narrative of grief. Each stitch I make changes fabric into a telling of my loss, allowing me to express sorrow in a visible way, much like the mourning attire of past generations.

Shifting Silhouettes

During World War I, the societal landscape underwent intense changes as the devastating casualties made traditional mourning customs impractical. Women, compelled by necessity, entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, assuming roles in wartime industries and contributions previously held by men. This shift marked the end of Queen Victoria's era of secluded mourning, as practical considerations outweighed the adherence to strict mourning etiquette. Simultaneously, the fashion world responded to these societal shifts by adapting

mourning attire to reflect both solemnity and practicality. Publications like *Vogue* played a pivotal role in showcasing mourning fashion alongside utilitarian wartime clothing, signaling a departure from elaborate mourning practices towards a more adaptable role for women in society.

An article by Lucie Whitmore (2017) examines how these changes disrupted traditional mourning norms in Britain during World War I. The realistic challenges faced by women engaged in war efforts necessitated a relaxation of mourning dress rules, influenced by perceptions that black mourning attire could dampen morale during the war effort. Despite this evolution, mourning dress retained its significance as a ritual for many women, providing a physical expression of their grief and a means to navigate their evolving social roles amidst the commotion of war.

In parallel, other shifts emerged regarding memorial practices, such as the rise of artificial flowers. By 1907, artificial flowers became popular for funerals, offering an economical option for poorer families who often rented floral displays. Florists rented out both potted plants and artificial flowers, which accentuated cost savings, although the quality deteriorated with repeated use. Despite florists' encouragement to purchase flowers outright, families often preferred immediate savings. By the 1890s, the floral industry aggressively advertised flowers as essential to funeral rites, highlighting beauty as a symbol of respect, opposing trends among poorer families who sometimes preferred "No Flowers" notices in obituaries to avoid the expense. Real or artificial flowers thus became central to mourning customs across England, reviving older traditions like "Flowering the Graves" and symbolizing purity and eternal life through white flowers, such as lilacs, which were especially chic during the late 19th century influenza epidemic (Bedikian, 2008).

Meanwhile, the rise of death photography, particularly of children, reinforced the cultural significance of floral displays. White flowers in these memorial images represented purity and

love, showcasing how traditional customs persisted even amid economic challenges and social evolution. This deep connection between personal loss and public remembrance mirrored the societal need to navigate mass grief during periods like the First World War, where the scale of death demanded new approaches to memorialization and mourning rituals (Hurren, 2022).

In "*An Archaeology of Remembering: Death, Bereavement, and the First World War*," Sarah Tarlow delves into how death and mourning were navigated during and after the war. Tarlow's exploration of material culture highlights the profound impact of war deaths, which demanded commemoration distinct from ordinary deaths. Her assertion that war deaths could not be treated as routine underscores the unique challenges faced in commemorating the fallen. Tarlow's work illuminates how mourning practices evolved to cope with the unprecedented scale of loss, blending personal grief with broader societal and cultural expressions of mourning. The result was a new dynamic in mourning traditions—balancing personal loss with the overwhelming, shared grief of society at large.

Just as women adapted their mourning practices during this time, my own process of producing a quilt from my dad's work shirts allows me to navigate my grief in a way that honors him while embracing the practicalities of life today. Similar to how artificial flowers became a staple for families wanting to honor their dead without the financial burden, my quilt alters the personal act of mourning into something tangible and lasting. It blends the emotional need for connection with the realities of modern life.

Contemporary Mourning Practices: Tattoos, Clothing, and the Expression of Grief

The range of treatments intended to address long-lasting grief reactions across varying cultural contexts is explored in "*Culturally Sensitive Psychosocial Interventions for Clinically Relevant Grief States: A Scoping Review*" by Aeschlimann et al. (2024). The review features a

variety of psychological interventions, such as community-based support groups, spiritual practices, and culturally adapted therapies, which incorporate language, symbols, and cultural values. The key takeaway is that therapies must be tailored to align with deeply ingrained cultural norms and beliefs that shape mourning experiences and coping mechanisms. This speaks to the universal need for mourning practices that resonate on both personal and cultural levels.

Paul Franz (2023), in *“The Need for Mourning,”* provides a philosophical perspective on grief. He integrates Jonathan Lear’s idea that mourning is not merely a personal experience but a societal and ethical foundation. Lear likens mourning to a transformative process that blends presence and absence, memory, and imagination. This lens confronts the conventional view of grief as a private act, instead positioning it as an essential societal function, fostering collective reflection in times of crisis.

Adding to these reflections on mourning, Buckle and Corbin Dwyer (2023) explore the rise of memorial tattoos in contemporary mourning practices. Their study examines tattoos as more than just body art; they are seen as tangible manifestations of "Embodied Meaning Making." Participants in the study view their tattoos as enduring symbols of connection to deceased loved ones, representing a perpetual bond that transcends physical absence (Oksanen & Turtiainen, 2005). The agency expressed in choosing tattoo designs enables mourners to construct personal narratives of grief and resilience, with tattoos serving as both private reflections and public declarations of loss. By blending personal expression with cultural ritual, memorial tattoos challenge traditional customs, allowing for more individualized and creative ways to process grief.

Clothing, similarly, plays a significant role in mourning, acting as both an object and action in various cultural contexts. In Swaziland, the attire of the deceased and the rituals surrounding it are central to mourning practices, as explored in *“Clothing, Death, and Memory”* (Golomski,

2015). Women process and distribute the deceased's clothing among relatives, often interring some garments with the body. This act of sharing plays a crucial role in memorialization, linking the deceased to the living through physical objects imbued with memory. Clothing in this context not only represents the physical form of the deceased but also holds emotional or spiritual energy, reinforcing the connection between the bereaved and the departed.

The presence of these objects aligns with my own process of making a quilt. Each piece of fabric becomes a tangible reminder of his presence, much like the Swazi tradition of using clothing to evoke memories. In making my quilt, I am participating in a similar cultural process—altering clothing into a symbol of memory and continuity.

The significance of clothing in mourning is further explored in Claire Wilcox's memoir, *“Patch Work, A Life Amongst Clothes,”* where she uses fashion and personal artifacts to navigate grief. As Gormally (2021) observes, Wilcox weaves personal and professional experiences together to reflect on themes of memory, loss, and the passage of time. Wilcox's detailed attention to the traces left on clothes—wear, stains, and even DNA imprints—serves as a metaphor for the lingering presence of loved ones, underscoring how objects hold the power to keep memories alive.

In Chinese death rituals, mourning clothes also play a key role, as discussed by Jenny Siow (2024). These garments, typically black or white, symbolize grief and respect, with specific attire worn according to the mourner's relationship to the deceased. More elaborate mourning clothes are worn during the final night of the wake, with garments denoting familial roles. The act of wearing these clothes reflects cultural beliefs, such as the idea that knots can hinder the spirit's journey. Siow emphasizes the importance of maintaining such traditions within modern society, underscoring how apparel continues to embody family values and respect for ancestors.

Together, these diverse perspectives on mourning—from memorial tattoos to clothing rituals—demonstrate how personal expressions of grief can intertwine with cultural and societal practices. Whether through tattoos that turn the body into a canvas of memory or through clothing that embodies the physical presence of the deceased, mourning is a multifaceted process. It blends personal narrative, cultural symbolism, and the enduring legacy of those who have passed away. My own process echoes these themes. I stitch together memories and emotions, creating a physical tribute to his life and my continued connection to him.

Methodology:

Integrating Content Analysis and Autoethnography Through the Perspective of Globalization

To investigate how grief is expressed via fashion, my research uses a dual methodology that blends content analysis with autoethnography. It focuses on mourning apparel and individual creative endeavors. Throughout history, fashion has been a major factor in mourning customs, reflecting broader trends in clothing, social standing, and changing cultural traditions. In the past, clothing with symbolic implications, such as purity or the passage to the hereafter, were frequently worn by mourners. These clothes revealed deeply held cultural beliefs about death and mourning. For instance, ancient Egyptians stressed purity and the afterlife by dressing in particular ways, such as in white or linen clothing. This illustrates how mourning clothes function as a symbol of spiritual beliefs that are different throughout the world in addition to being an expression of grief.

Different societies acquired certain colors and dress styles—like black or dark garments—to represent sorrow and communicate collective sadness as mourning customs evolved. The usage of mourning clothes in different historical periods—from Mesopotamia and ancient Egypt to the Victorian era and modern times—highlights the interaction between societal standards, fashion,

and the experience of loss in humankind. The influence of cross-continental exchanges of cultural values and customs, made possible by globalization, has led to a transformation in the expression of sorrow, which is one facet of this progression. Comparing the customs of mourning in England, France, and Scotland throughout the 16th century reveals that clothing worn during this time was frequently a political symbol, signifying larger social and political shifts. This progression explains how cross-cultural interactions result in worldwide influences. In a similar vein, Claire Wilcox's memoir "*Patch Work: A Life Among Clothes*" illustrates how people use a variety of cultural influences to help them cope with and reflect on loss by showing how sentimental items like clothing hold memories of loved ones.

Globalization has greatly influenced how I approach grieving in my own art. This thesis integrates historical and cultural mourning customs from across the globe, encompassing both traditional and modern perspectives on mortality. By fusing cultural meaning with personal expression, making a quilt out of my dad's work shirts reflects international grieving rituals as well as a personal homage. My patchwork represents the meeting point of individual grief with a more universal story of loss, much like the worldwide phenomena of memorial tattoos or the cultural exchange of bereavement clothing conventions.

The main research method for this study is content analysis, with an emphasis on both historical and modern grieving styles. To uncover patterns and cultural distinctions in mourning clothes, historical context entails researching past mourning costumes from varied civilizations and exploring archival records, fashion plates, and visual evidence. This analysis shows how fashion conveys more profound sentiments on bereavement. In addition, I examine how people mourn their loved ones through clothing in the present, and the weight of the impact of globalization within these traditions.

My project combines text analysis with an autoethnographic element through my personal creative effort, a quilt created from the clothing of my dad. By means of autoethnography, I describe my own grieving experience while sewing. By using a narrative approach, I can relate my own experiences to more general practices and show how emotional coping mechanisms can be derived from personal rituals of production. My work challenges conventional views on mourning wear by fusing academic research with personal storytelling. It also examines the possibilities for healing associated with mourning clothing and how it might help with emotional recovery.

This dual approach is unique for the field since it emphasizes the complexity of grief and acknowledges that there is no one right way to grieve. It does this by fusing emotional expression with challenging academic research. I offer a distinctive emotional and creative perspective to the study of grief and fashion by evaluating these basic forces from the standpoint of globalization. I do this by demonstrating how cultural influences and individual experiences come together to form various bereavement practices.

Production and Analysis: Grieving Through My Project

Creating my quilt has been an incredibly personal and healing journey, helping me navigate my complex emotions of mourning. Working with my dad's work clothes was more than a creative task; it was an intentional choice that carried massive emotional significance. Each stitch and every piece of fabric was a connection to my dad—his hard work, dedication, and the essence of who he was (See Figure 1.). By transforming his everyday garments into a precious keepsake, I found a tangible way to keep his memory alive, turning simple items into a sincere tribute.

Throughout this process, I've learned that grief is anything but straightforward. It ebbs and flows, mixing sadness, anger, guilt, and joy in unexpected ways. There were times when I avoided working on the quilt because I wasn't ready to face the emotions it stirred. This taught me the

importance of self-compassion and the need to be gentle with myself, especially on difficult days. I discovered that healing isn't linear and requires patience, self-kindness, and a willingness to embrace the messy, imperfect reality of mourning.

My path aligns with findings from studies on the role of grief rituals, which emphasize the importance of structured, intentional ways to process loss. In the study "Relationship Between Grief Rituals, Support from Relatives and Friends, and Shiduers' Mental Health" by Zhang and Jia, grief rituals were categorized into three types: those performed soon after loss, on special days, and on ordinary days. Rituals performed soon after loss and on special days were shown to alleviate symptoms of PTSD, depression, and anxiety by providing a specific time and space for grieving. However, continuous commemoration on ordinary days was found to increase prolonged grief and depression, highlighting the importance of balancing grief rituals with everyday life (Zhang & Jia, 2020). My project served as a structured practice that allowed me to confront my grief within a defined scope, providing comfort and connection without overwhelming my daily routine.

The journey was filled with moments of doubt, mistakes, and missteps, largely because I was so immersed in my grief. Yet, these challenges became valuable lessons. They taught me to seek balance, prioritize my well-being, and lean on my support system when needed. My family, friends, and faith have been my pillars. They have provided love, patience, and encouragement when I needed it most. My siblings, each in their own way, found unique paths to honor our dad's memory—through art, hobbies, or continuing his legacy. Their understanding and shared experiences have been a source of comfort and strength, reminding me that I am not alone on this journey, see Figure 2.

Ultimately, this project has been more than just an academic endeavor; it has been a personal exploration of grief and resilience. It has shown me the power of creativity in coping with

loss and underscored the importance of integrating personal experiences into scholarly work. Finding meaning in my grief through this project, and seeing my siblings do the same, has been a critical part of my healing.

This experience has deepened my understanding of what truly matters—love, family, and the surviving power of memory. Grief has taught me to cherish the moments of connection, embrace the support of others, and honor the past while finding ways to move onward. My heartache never goes away, but I've learned to squeeze the broken pieces tight, to wrap them up in memories, and to make new ones, see Figure 3.

Conclusion

The conclusion of my thesis draws together the insights gathered from the exploration of grief through historical mourning attire, contemporary fashion practices, and the personal journey of creating a quilt from my dad's work clothes. Grief is an inherently complex and deeply individual experience, and how human beings express and navigate their loss varies widely across cultures, personal circumstances, and historical contexts. By examining the evolution of mourning fashion in European and American cultures, this study has highlighted the significant role of clothing and ritual in communicating grief, shaping identities, and aiding in the mourning process.

Historically, mourning attire served as a visual manifestation of loss, allowing individuals to outwardly express their grief while adhering to societal expectations. From the structured codes of Victorian mourning dress to the more subdued mourning practices of the 20th century, these garments reflected evolving social standards and attitudes toward death, loss, and remembrance. The transition from formalized mourning dress to contemporary, personalized expressions of grief mirrors a broader cultural shift towards individualism and the need for personal, rather than prescriptive, pathways through mourning.

Contemporary fashion allows for a more personalized approach to grief, where individuals can create their own rituals of remembrance and mourning that are meaningful to them. This aligns with the argument presented in the paper "*Rituals and the Grieving Process*," which critiques the Western cultural model of grieving as primarily "letting go." Such a perspective often fails to address the needs of the bereaved, especially when it enforces a singular pathway to closure. Instead, the study advocates for an open appreciation of rituals that emphasize transformation, connection, and transition, aligning ritual enactments with the unique needs of the individual (Romanoff & Terenzio, 1998). This broader understanding legitimizes the diverse ways people can navigate their grief and find peace.

The quilt I created as part of my thesis serves as a contemporary ritual of mourning, transforming my dad's everyday work clothes into a definite, lasting homage. It reflects the broader notion that rituals can be more than a way of "moving on"—they can be acts of connection that maintain bonds with the deceased. This resonates with the study's findings, which emphasize the need for practices that recast the self and accommodate the bereaved's changed world. For many, including myself, the act of creating, wearing, or engaging with mourning attire or personal artifacts can be a way to keep a loved one's memory alive, reshaping the relationship in a way that is comforting and meaningful.

Still, the study highlights how community rituals often aid in resolving grief, but those whose loss falls outside social norms may not find relief in these established practices. The psychotherapy establishment's attempts to create bereavement rituals often fail when they are not co-created with the bereaved, emphasizing the importance of personalization. My thesis project illustrates the value of individualized grieving rituals, as my quilt became a personal expression of mourning that honored my dad's legacy and allowed me to process my grief on my terms.

Fashion and personal rituals, therefore, play a critical role in navigating grief, offering a means of expression when words often fail. By honoring the multiplicity of pathways through grief, this thesis stresses the importance of flexibility and creativity in mourning practices. Mourning fashion, past and present, and individualized rituals like my quilt, demonstrate how grief can be transformed into acts of celebration and connection, helping the bereaved steer through the emotional turmoil of loss in ways that feel authentic and healing.

Ultimately, this study calls for a broader acceptance of varied grief expressions, recognizing that there is no one "right" way to mourn. Embracing rituals that honor the unique needs and relationships of the grieving can provide more meaningful, peaceful resolutions, acknowledging that the journey through grief is as individual as the lives and loves we seek to remember, see Figure 4.

Illustrations



Figure 1. Dad's Shirts, 95"x98", Flannel Shirt and Cotton, 2024



Figure 2. Forever Weber, 2023



Figure 3. Dad Quilt, 95"x98", Flannel and Cotton, 2024



Figure 4. Holding Quilt, 95"x98", Flannel Shirt and Cotton, 2024

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Healing Through Loss: A Guide to Grief Resources and Support

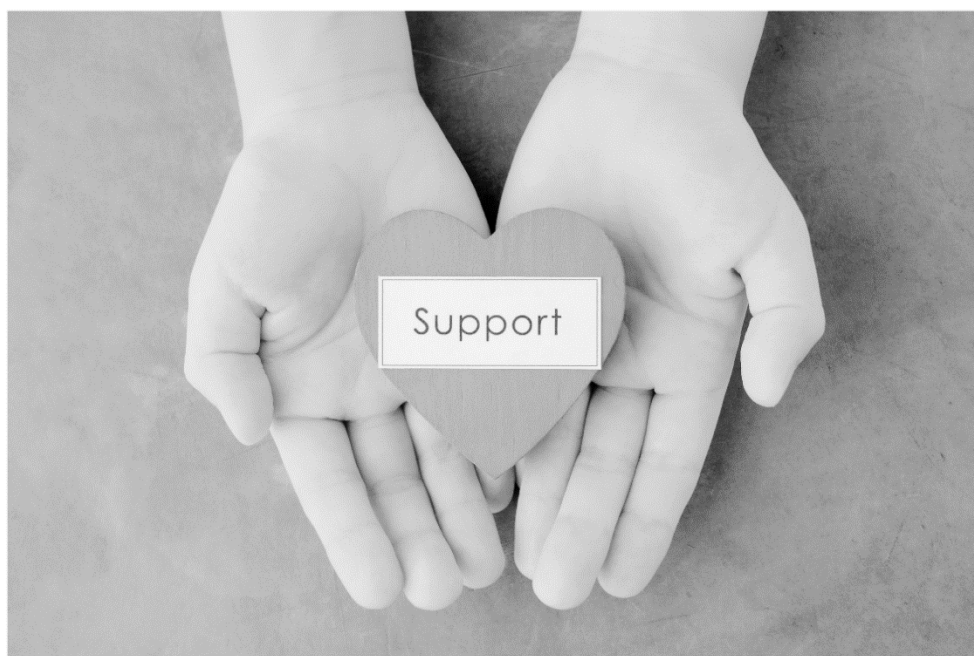
Lindenwood University
© October 2024, Sharon Caitlin Carpenter

Understanding Grief

01

Grief is a personal and often overwhelming journey that touches every part of who we are. It doesn't follow a set path, and no two experiences are exactly alike. You might have heard about the stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—but it's important to know that these aren't strict steps we move through in order. Grief can be messy, looping back and forth between emotions or skipping stages altogether. It's not just one thing; it can feel like waves of sadness, moments of numbness, bursts of anger, or even moments of unexpected relief.

There are different kinds of grief, too. Sometimes it's immediate, hitting us hard after a loss, while other times it builds up over time, like when we anticipate losing someone. And sometimes, grief can feel especially heavy and persistent, making everyday life feel impossible to navigate. The experience is individual and influenced by many factors. However grief shows up for you, it's okay—it's your own unique way of processing and honoring the love and loss you carry.



Using This Grief Guide

02

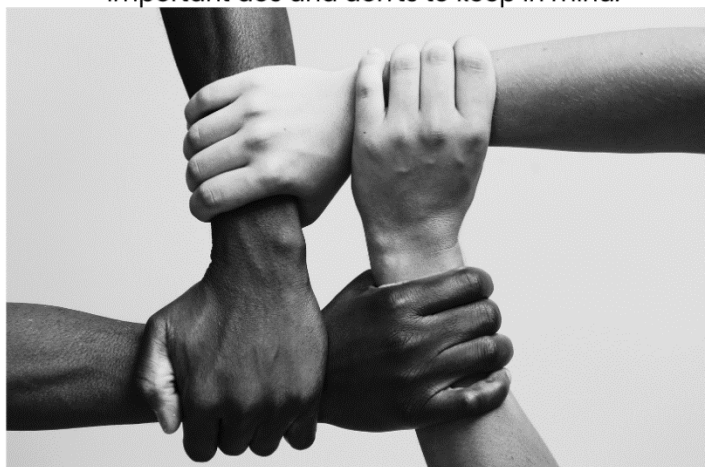
The intention behind this grief resource guide is to offer a compassionate, comprehensive overview of tools and insights to support you or your loved ones during times of loss. Grief is a deeply personal journey, and understanding the resources available can empower and comfort you as you navigate this path. I've created this guide with care and empathy, drawing from diverse perspectives and practical experiences to meet the varied needs of those in mourning. Whether you are using these resources for the first time or returning to seek additional support, this guide is designed to provide clarity, offer solace, and help you find meaningful ways to process and honor your grief.



Ways to Support Someone Who is Grieving

03

Supporting someone who is grieving can be challenging, but your presence and understanding can make a huge difference during this time. Here are some tips for friends, family, and caregivers on how to provide support, along with important dos and don'ts to keep in mind.



Tips for Providing Support

1. Be Present:

- Sometimes, just being there is enough. Offer your company without feeling the need to fill every silence with words. Your presence can be a comforting reminder that they are not alone.

2. Listen Actively:

- Allow them to express their feelings without interruption. Listening without judgment can provide a safe space for them to share their thoughts and emotions.

3. Offer Practical Help:

- Grief can make everyday tasks feel overwhelming. Offer specific assistance, such as cooking meals, running errands, or helping with household chores.

4. Check-In Regularly:

- Continue to reach out even after the initial loss. Grief doesn't have a timeline, and your ongoing support can be reassuring.

5. Share Memories:

- If appropriate, share positive memories or stories about the deceased. This can help keep their memory alive and provide comfort.

6. Encourage Professional Help:

- If you notice they are struggling significantly, gently encourage them to seek support from a therapist or counselor who specializes in grief.

Dos and Don'ts

04

Dos:

- **Do Be Patient:** Understand that everyone grieves differently and at their own pace. Allow them to process their emotions without rushing them.
- **Do Use Their Loved One's Name:** Mentioning the deceased's name can be comforting and shows that you acknowledge their loss and the significance of their loved one.
- **Do Offer Specific Help:** Instead of saying, "Let me know if you need anything," suggest concrete tasks you can assist with, like grocery shopping or taking care of pets.
- **Do Respect Their Feelings:** Validate their emotions, whether they're feeling sad, angry, or even relieved. Let them know it's okay to feel whatever they're feeling.

Don'ts:

- **Don't Minimize Their Grief:** Avoid phrases like "They're in a better place" or "At least they lived a long life." These comments can come off as dismissive and may invalidate their pain.
- **Don't Force Conversations:** If they're not ready to talk about their feelings or the deceased, don't pressure them. Respect their boundaries.
- **Don't Compare Losses:** Everyone's grief is unique. Avoid saying things like, "I understand how you feel" unless you are sharing a personal experience in a supportive context.
- **Don't Rush Them to Move On:** Grieving is a process that can take time. Avoid suggesting they should "get over it" or "move on" too quickly.

Your empathy and understanding can help them feel less isolated as they work through their emotions and find healing in their own time.

Cultural Perspectives on Mourning

05



Cultural practices offer more than just visual symbols; they provide a sense of solace, community, and a way to navigate the overwhelming emotions that come with loss. Wearing specific garments, participating in rituals, or engaging in community mourning can create a comforting structure during a time that often feels chaotic and isolating. They remind us that, though grief is personal, it is also shared across time and place, connecting us to those who came before and those who mourn alongside us now.

Hispanic Cultures

- Books:
 - “Day of the Dead: A Celebration of Life and Death” by Mary J. Andrade (explores the customs of Día de los Muertos).
 - “Mexican Enough: My Life Between the Borderlines” by Stephanie Elizondo Griest (includes insights on Mexican mourning traditions).
- Websites:
 - Día de los Muertos Festivals: Local websites and community centers often provide insights into public celebrations and memorial practices.
 - What’s Your Grief?: This site offers culturally sensitive articles, including Hispanic grief practices.
- Organizations:
 - Latino Community Foundation: Provides culturally specific resources and community support for grieving Hispanic families.

Asian Cultures

- Books:
 - “The Art of Death: Writing the Final Story” by Edwidge Danticat (includes essays on various cultural perspectives, including Asian mourning).
 - “Grieving: Dispatches from a Wounded Country” by Cristina Rivera Garza (explores grief from a broader cultural perspective).
- Websites:
 - Journey of Hearts: A website offering support and resources that include Asian grieving traditions and cultural insights.
- Documentaries:
 - “Departures” (2008): A Japanese film that delves into the cultural significance of death rituals and grieving in Japan.

Indigenous and African Cultures

- Books:
 - “We Keep the Dead Close” by Becky Cooper (explores mourning within indigenous frameworks).
 - “The Sacred Way of Grieving: Native American Paths to Healing and Transformation” by Francis Weller.
- Websites:
 - First Nations Health Authority: Offers resources and guidance on grief within Indigenous communities.
 - Africa Speaks: Shares African grief rituals, traditions, and their importance in community healing.

Western Cultures

- Books:
 - “The Year of Magical Thinking” by Joan Didion (an intimate look at Western approaches to grief).
 - “Grief Observed” by C.S. Lewis (explores personal grief within Western cultural contexts).
- Websites:
 - Modern Loss: A platform with resources, articles, and personal stories that reflect Western mourning practices.
 - National Alliance for Grieving Children: Offers resources on Western grief practices and support for families.
- Support Groups:
 - GriefShare: Offers grief recovery support groups across the U.S. and internationally, including Western rituals and customs.

Interfaith and Multicultural

06

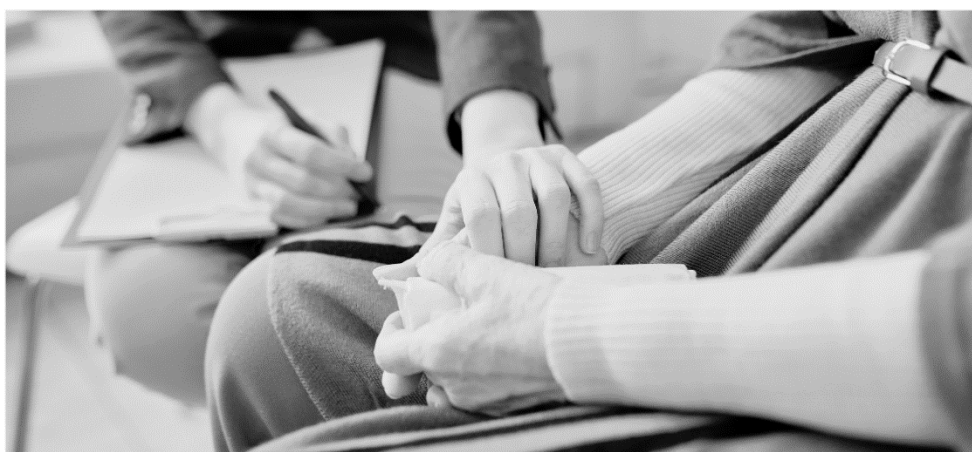
- Books:
 - “Grief and the Expressive Arts: Practices for Creating Meaning” by Barbara Ganim (includes multicultural approaches to grieving).
- Websites:
 - The Dougy Center: Offers resources on grief support that acknowledge and incorporate diverse cultural traditions.
 - The Centre for Interfaith Relations: Provides insights into how different faiths and cultures approach mourning and loss.



Practical Resources for Grieving

07

There are many resources available to provide comfort, guidance, and support during this challenging time. There are support networks, specialized therapists, books, creative outlets, and apps. These tools can help you find comfort and express your emotions in meaningful ways and the compassion needed to heal at your own pace.



Support Networks

- Support Groups:
 - GriefShare: Offers in-person and online grief support groups across the U.S. and internationally. [GriefShare](#)
 - The Compassionate Friends: Provides support for families after the death of a child, with local chapters and online communities. [The Compassionate Friends](#)
 - Modern Loss: An online community with articles, personal stories, and support for navigating loss. [Modern Loss](#)
 - National Alliance for Grieving Children: Focuses on supporting children, teens, and families with grief resources and support networks. [NAGC](#)

Mental Health Resources

- Psychology Today's Therapist Finder: Allows you to search for therapists specializing in grief counseling in your local area. [Psychology Today](#)
- BetterHelp: An online platform connecting you with licensed therapists who specialize in grief. [BetterHelp](#)
- Hotlines and Crisis Centers:
 - National Grief Hotline (U.S.): 1-800-445-4808, providing free grief support and counseling.
 - Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 (U.S.) for free, 24/7 crisis support via text, including grief-related issues.
 - Samaritans: Available 24/7 for emotional support in the UK and Ireland. [Samaritans](#)

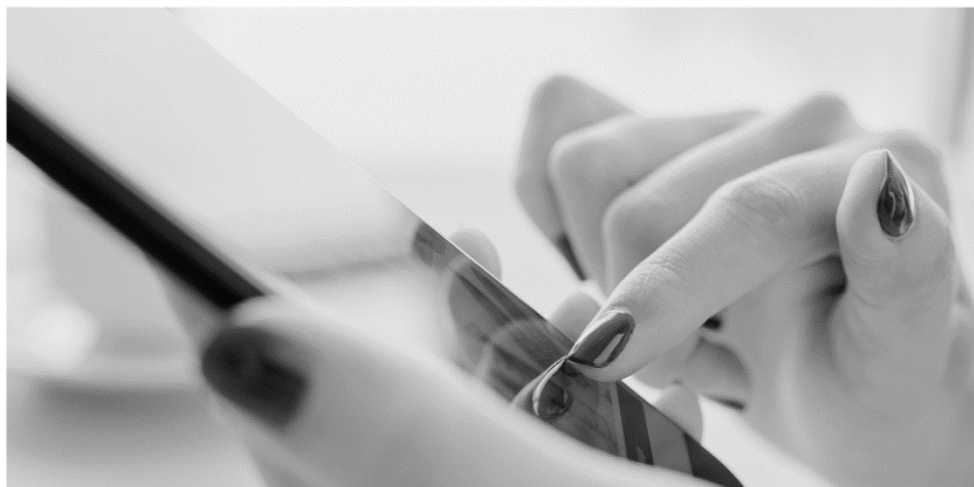
Books and Articles

08

- Books:
 - "It's OK That You're Not OK" by Megan Devine: A compassionate guide that validates the complex emotions of grief.
 - "The Year of Magical Thinking" by Joan Didion: A personal reflection on loss and the unexpected nature of grieving.
 - "Bearing the Unbearable" by Joanne Cacciatore: Offers insights into the transformative power of grief and healing.
 - "Grief Works" by Julia Samuel: Explores stories of loss and provides practical advice on managing grief.
- Articles and Blogs:
 - What's Your Grief?: Offers articles, photo challenges, and resources to explore different aspects of grieving. [What's Your Grief](#)
 - Option B: A platform that shares stories and resources on resilience and grief, inspired by Sheryl Sandberg's book. [Option B](#)

Apps and Online Tools

- Mindfulness and Meditation Apps:
 - Headspace: Offers guided meditations specifically designed for grief and healing. [Headspace](#)
 - Calm: Features breathing exercises, sleep stories, and meditation to help manage grief-related anxiety. [Calm](#)
- Mood Trackers and Journals:
 - Grief Works App: Offers support for navigating grief with guided exercises, advice, and audio sessions. [Grief Works](#)
 - Daylio: A mood-tracking app that helps you reflect on your emotions and identify patterns in your grief journey.
- Virtual Therapy Platforms:
 - Talkspace: Connects you with licensed therapists online, specializing in grief and loss. [Talkspace](#)
 - 7 Cups: Offers free online support from trained listeners and licensed therapists for those struggling with grief. [7 Cups](#)



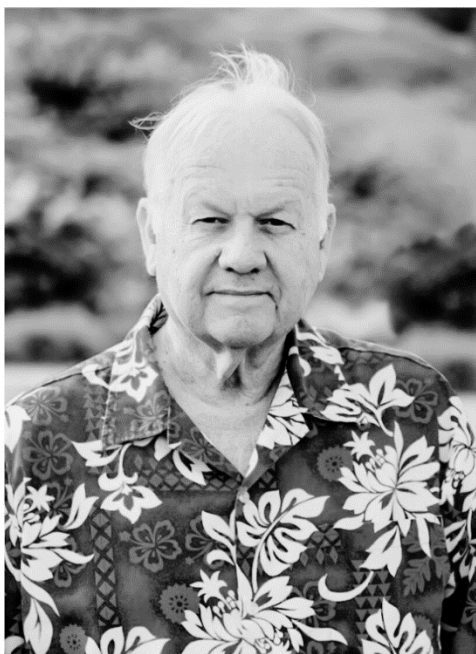


09

Creative Outlets

- Memorial Projects:
 - Making Keepsake Quilts: Create memory quilts using clothing or fabrics that remind you of your loved one. Online communities like [Quiltingboard](#) offer tutorials and support.
 - Gather clothing items from your loved one that hold special significance, such as shirts, dresses, or ties.
 - Consider choosing fabrics that evoke memories, like favorite colors or patterns.
 - Cut the clothing into squares or other shapes and arrange them in a way that feels meaningful to you.
 - You can either sew the quilt yourself or enlist the help of a professional quilter to bring your vision to life.
 - Memory Pillows:
 - Similar to quilts, you can create memory pillows using fabric from clothing items.
 - Cut and sew the fabric into pillow shapes, filling them with stuffing or using a pillow insert.
 - Memory Jars or Boxes:
 - Collect small pieces of clothing, buttons, or fabric scraps and place them in a memory jar or box.
 - Embroidered Keepsakes:
 - Use clothing items to create embroidered pieces that incorporate significant dates, names, or messages.
 - This could be done on a simple piece of fabric that can later be framed or made into a wall hanging.
- Custom Clothing Alterations:
 - Consider altering a piece of clothing that belonged to your loved one. For example, you can turn a favorite shirt into a scarf or use fabric from their clothing to create a patch on your jeans.
 - Adding embellishments, like buttons or patches with significant symbols, can also create a personal touch.
- Journaling:
 - Prompts and guided journals, like “Grief Day by Day” by Jan Warner, help process emotions through writing.
- Art Therapy Projects:
 - Consider painting, collaging, or sculpting as ways to express feelings when words fall short.
 - Local art therapy groups can often be found through community centers.

A Note From Sharon ¹⁰



I am deeply grateful to my loving dad and devoted disciple of Jesus Christ, Warren Weber Sr. Who taught his children the comforting knowledge that we will see each other again. Dad, you have been my angel and my guide, inspiring me not only to continue my own education but also to educate and build disciples of Jesus Christ among others.

Your unwavering faith and love have shaped my journey, and your legacy of spiritual strength and dedication continues to inspire me every day. Thank you for instilling in me the values of faith, education, and service to others. Your life and teachings will forever be a beacon of light in my life and in the lives of those I reach.

You Don't Just Lose Someone Once

You lose them over and over,
sometimes many times a day.

When the loss, momentarily forgotten,
creeps up, and attacks you from behind.

Fresh waves of grief as the realization hits home,
they are gone.

Again.

You don't just lose someone once, you lose them every time you open your eyes to a new dawn, and as you awaken, so does your memory, so does the jolting bolt of lightning that rips into your heart, they are gone.

Again.

Losing someone is a journey, not a one-off.

There is no end to the loss, there is only a learned skill on how to stay afloat,
when it washes over.

Be kind to those who are sailing this stormy sea,
they have a journey ahead of them, and a daily shock to the system each time they realize,
they are gone,

Again.

You don't just lose someone once, you lose them every day,
for a lifetime.

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