

# Ambushed by Grief

A survival guide for the  
early shock of bereavement

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Ambushed by Grief

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CONTENTS:  
FRAGMENTS, FINDINGS,  
INSIGHTS & MEANDERINGS

There is little discernible order to the contents of this guide any more than there is an orderly progression to your life when you have been ambushed by grief. But here, for your convenience, are listed in the order of their appearance, the assorted fragments, findings, insights and meanderings in this book.

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# *Dedicated to*

## **ELLIE'S LIST**

My Father  
My Grandparents  
My Sister Lori  
My Brother-in-Law Frank  
My Nephew Kent  
My Nephew Bart  
My Great Nephew Kyle  
Many Aunts, Uncles,  
Cousins, friends,  
congregants, associates...

## **TONI'S LIST**

Mom and Dad  
Griff and Alicia  
Grandparents  
The many Aunts  
and Uncles  
Patricia  
Bernice and Robert  
The AIDS Family  
Friends and Associates, ...

and the sea of faces,  
the chorus of voices,  
known now only in  
fond memory and  
gentle gratitude,

because they have taught us that...

**“...suddenly with no warning  
you are ambushed by grief.”**

*To Bless the Space between Us, A Book of Blessings,*  
by John O'Donahue, Doubleday, New York. 2008

Dear Reader,

*We are sorry for your loss.*

We know that's easy to say. And it doesn't begin to touch the ache that you feel, but we truly are sorry and we would like to help.

Sadly, there are no words that can take away your pain. Please know that we understand that. We know that the two things you desperately want are:

**Most important:  
to have your loved one back**

**Or at least:  
to have the hurt stop**



These are the very things that no one can give you.

Your loss has set you on a strange and  
painful journey into the unexpected reality  
of bereavement.

The private world of grief has a different orbit of  
time . . .

**...before death**

**...after death**

Holidays are not welcome. Sunshine isn't cheerful.

Things disappear and you don't know where they went. (Why are the keys in the refrigerator?)

We offer this little book with the hope that it will help and be a support for you. Please use this book as a guide in any way you choose.

There are pages you may want to keep and pages you will throw away.

Some pages are for you to write, draw or doodle on...if you feel like doing it. There are also some fill-in-the-blanks pages. And some pages just for you to read and think about,

**...and maybe even argue with.**

It's okay to skip around, and also read  
the last page first if you want.

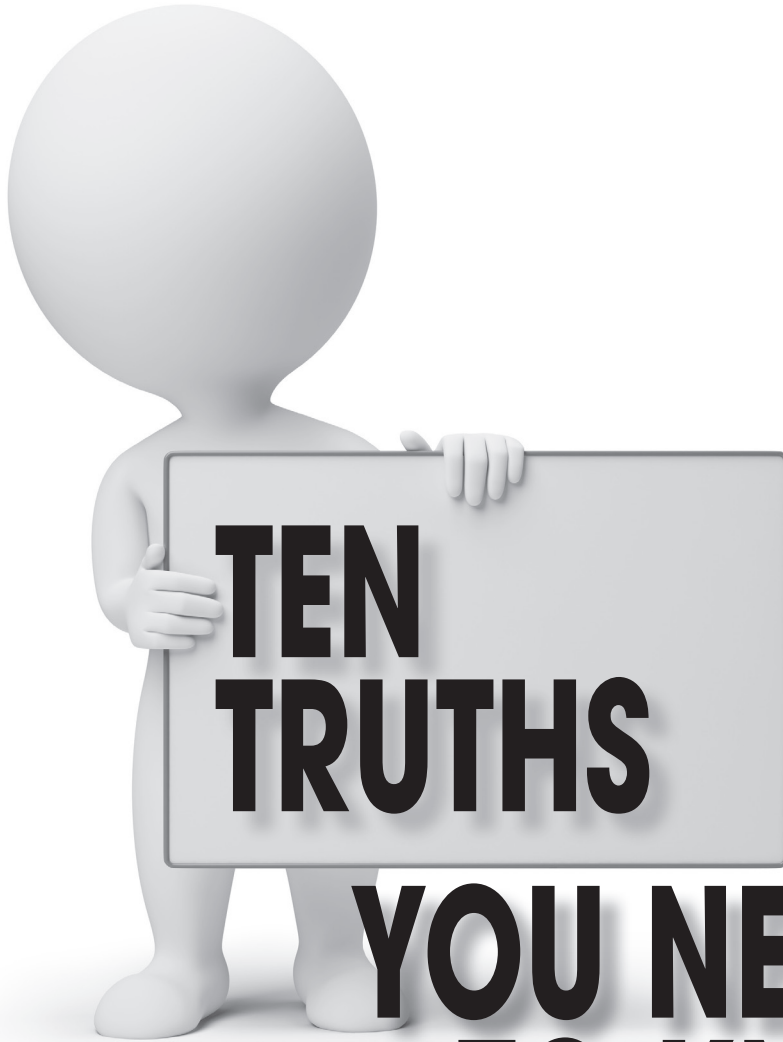
**You're in control here  
and we honor your spirit.**

With our best wishes,

*Ellie*  
‡  
*Toni*

Ellie and Toni





**TEN  
TRUTHS**

**YOU NEED  
TO KNOW**



**10**

**Alcohol and drugs  
are no substitute for  
chocolate and hugs.**

**9**

**No one can make  
the pain end before  
it's time. Grief has  
it's own agenda.**

**8**

**You can't live in the past.  
Time only moves forward.  
Eventually you have to go to the  
bathroom. And at some point,  
you have to eat and sleep.**

**7**

**You will find out who understands  
and who doesn't (yet).**

**6**

**You are not going crazy. It's normal to hear him, see her, and sense their presence.**

**5**

**Making lists doesn't help if you lose the lists.**

**4**

**You have an indestructible core and an unquenchable flame, but you don't know who you are right now.**

**3**

**You may think you have lost your faith, but your faith has not let go of you.**

**2**

**You will never forget.**

**1**

**You will survive.**

Belonging —  
A Lament

You belong to me.

You belong to us.

We belong to each other.

You can't have left us.

You belong here.

It feels so strange, unreal.

I can't believe this

You can't not be here.

This is where you belong.

I never realized we were so connected.

The circle is broken.

There is an empty space now.

Somebody cut my heart out.

What are we going to do now?

You belonged to us.

We've been robbed.



# NOBODY GRIEVES THE SAME WAY

Are you in deep anguish?  
– **that's normal.**

Are you not so much feeling grieved, but that you would like to punch a hole in someone or something? – **that's normal too.**

Are you only experiencing a mild sense of disorientation? – **that's normal too.**



Are you feeling like there's a lead weight on your heart? – **that's normal too.**



Are you experiencing only occasional moments of sadness? – **that's normal too.**

Are you like a yo-yo – up and down with all or some of those experiences?  
– **that's normal too.**

*Normal doesn't mean it doesn't hurt*

*Normal doesn't mean you wouldn't benefit  
from some help or support*

Normal just means...this is the way it goes.

*What else is normal?*

Well, maybe you have trouble sleeping.

Maybe you're not eating well – or too well.

Are you numb? Does your body hurt?

Are you hyper?

Are you out of steam?

**Normal.**

Are you caught between how you think you should grieve and doing it your way?



Is it hard to focus?

Is there sometimes a lot of turmoil inside you?

Are you daydreaming more than usual?

Are you often irritated with everyone and everything?

Do you wish people could just understand what you're going through?

**Normal.**

Do you want to pull the covers over your head and not get up in the morning?

Or are you keeping really busy?

**Normal.**

Well, there. You get the idea.

A wide range of emotions, experiences, reactions...all a part of grieving.

So don't be surprised by what ambushes you.

Take a look at Grief Zingo on the next page.

See how much of it relates to you today.

# GRIEFZINGO

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Cross off any box that applies to you. You get ZINGO when you have crossed off five boxes, across, up and down, or diagonally. If you get ZINGO, you need chocolate, or a hug.

	<b>G</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>
<b>Z</b>	I couldn't sleep last night	I couldn't find my keys	Everybody irritates me today	I missed a meal - I didn't feel like eating	I keep wondering why
<b>I</b>	I feel like there's a lead weight on my heart	I am so angry at God	I'm amazed at how kind people are	I can't seem to get organized	I actually laughed at something today
<b>N</b>	I'm trying to be strong for my family	I'm dreading the next big holiday	I cried today	I couldn't find my keys again	I don't feel like socializing
<b>G</b>	I keep wondering, what if	I didn't feel like getting up and dressed today	I'm getting tired of all these casseroles	I wish people wouldn't try to cheer me up	I can't seem to focus on anything
<b>O</b>	Someone was very helpful to me/us today	I wish this pain would stop	I can't seem to get interested in anything	I'm not sure what I believe in anymore	I cried again today