



*I Remember Her*TM

A Healing Journal by
Qiana M. Davis

I Remember Her TM
A Healing Journal

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Foreword



This journal is dedicated to Mary Louise Brinkley and Varanda Maria Brinkley, two of the strongest, smartest, and most inspirational women I've ever known. All my beauty, strength, ambition, resilience, compassion, generosity and intellect, I owe to these two beautiful souls I call grandma and mom. They instilled and nurtured within me the power to heal and to serve.



The written word is one of the most powerful tools ever known to man. It helped me express all of the heartbreak, love, desire, and happiness I have experienced over the years. Since losing both my grandma and mom within three years of each other, I have a newfound appreciation for life. Between all of the pain, sadness, anger, and grief, I gained more peace of mind. It is through this pain of loss and much adversity that the concept of this journal was born.



It is my hope that this little labor of love encouraging you to deal with your loss, while I share in mine, will help ease your pain, lift your spirits, and ultimately set you on the path to healing.

Sincerely



Qiana M Davis

Qiana Maria Davis



Introduction



The news that would change my life forever started as a knock at my front door. As the nightly news announced the day's latest tragedies, I started to worry when she didn't beat me home. My mom had begun classes to complete her master's degree. She was finally moving forward in the Occupational therapy master's program that mourning the death of my grandma took her from three years earlier. When she wasn't visiting with friends, schooling in combination with home visits as an occupational therapist periodically had her home late. However, it wasn't the late hour that filled me with dread. It was a nagging sense that something was wrong that I couldn't shake.

Unbeknownst to me and my younger brother, the policemen standing just outside our front door would confirm my fear.

"We're looking for Garyn Davis. Do you know Varanda Brinkley?"

"Yes, she's my mom," my brother replied.

"She's our mom," I said, thrusting the back door wide open.

"I'm sorry to tell you that Varanda [your mom] is deceased. She died earlier tonight."

The wave of shock that hit us rocked me to my core and made my brother fall to the floor in disbelief. I just saw her last night. He spoke with her earlier that morning.

What did they mean mom's dead?

What happened?

How did she die?

When did she die?

There were so many questions and the police officers had nothing further to offer but a business card and a contact for the Wayne County Medical Examiner's office. The worst part was yet to come. My brother and I still had to go identify her body and collect her belongings; as well as inform all of our family, her friends, church members, classmates, and colleagues that the woman they confided in, loved, and remembered was gone.



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(Date of her death)

The greatest heartbreak I've ever known is the day I lost my

(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)

[Insert a picture of your (mom, grandma, wife, sister etc)]



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I remember it like it was yesterday. The day

_____ died I felt.
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)

(Sadness, Anger, Resentment, Shock, Disbelief. Share your feelings below.)



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What stands out the most about the moment you knew she was gone?



the Five Stages of Grief



The five stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. This model of stages was originated by Elizabeth Kubler-Ross to help gauge the emotional states of terminally ill patients post-diagnosis. It has since been adapted and modified to six to seven stages as a representation of the varying stages of depression. The same phases apply to the grief one experiences after losing a loved one. There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to grief. Not everyone will experience it in the same way and you may not even experience all the stages of grief. There is no getting around grieving and no right way to grieve.

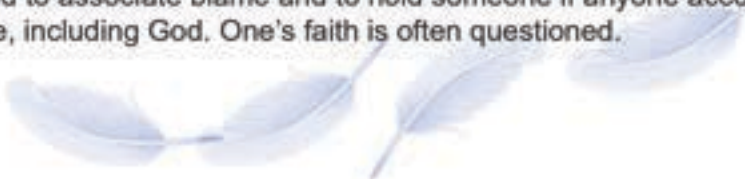
What's most important is that regardless of what stage you are in, grieving is a normal part of the healing process. Wherever you are in your healing journey, it's okay to feel whatever you are feeling; whether that feeling is numbness, pain, sadness, anger, depression, disbelief, peace, or acceptance. Work through your emotions with the belief that while time may not heal all wounds, the pain will lessen and acceptance is attainable. You are stronger than you know.

STAGE ONE: *Shock/Denial*

The initial stage most people experience after the news of losing a loved one. Can be characterized by the feeling of paralysis or numbness. Form of protection to begin processing loss. Refusal to believe the loss has occurred or that the mourner is dreaming/having a nightmare and the loss isn't real. Feeling like a mistake must have been made.

STAGE TWO: *Anger*

The most common reaction to losing a loved one. Anger can present itself in multiple ways including being angry with the deceased, lashing out at others or even being angry at self. There may be a need to associate blame and to hold someone if anyone accountable, including God. One's faith is often questioned.



the Five Stages of Grief

STAGE THREE: *Bargaining*

During their pain and grief, some may experience attempting to negotiate to get back the deceased. Striking a deal with God or some higher power is a common approach. A mourner in the bargaining stage of grief may begin promising to lead a better life in exchange for the life of their loved one.

STAGE FOUR: *Depression*

Depression is perhaps the most widespread and most recognized stage of the grieving process. Some of its symptoms include guilt, sadness, hopelessness, and detachment. In its most severe form, depression can involve an emotional pain so deep that one can long to join their loved one in death. Suicidal thoughts can be frequent. More often than not, crying spells, feelings of emptiness, avoiding reminders of their loved one and the inability to enjoy memories and or afflict the mourner.

STAGE FIVE: *Acceptance*

This is the last and most common stage in the grieving process when the mourner comes to terms with the loss of the deceased and accepts that they are not coming back. A sense of calm, perhaps even peace is attained and the mourner can start to rebuild their lives without their loved one in it..

What stage of grief did you first experience when you learned you
lost your _____?
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)



Shock! Denial:

STAGE ONE



It was all good just a day ago...

There is something surreal about losing a loved one that sends you into a state of shock and disbelief. The thought of losing them seems unbelievable like it's happening to someone else. Even saying the words out loud feels like speaking a foreign language for the first time or uttering some long-forgotten alien tongue.

The night before my mother's sudden and untimely death, I stood inside her bedroom doorway gossiping over the day's events and the latest happenings on our favorite soap opera drama, Tyler Perry's, *The Haves and the Have Nots*. Like many nights before, she lay in bed while we chatted as our cat Gray Alexander paper dived hide-go seek nearby.

It had been days since we last spoke. Sometimes we were like two ships passing in the night drifting apart only to come together again to set sail on another adventure. Little did I know as I bid her goodnight, the next time I would see her she would be laying a slate in the morgue. The next 24 hours from the time the police pronounced my mom dead to when my youngest brother and I made the dreaded trip to the Wayne County Coroner's office seemed like an eternity.

As we filled out the necessary paperwork and waited in the lobby, our minds raced, hoping for the slim chance that a massive mistake had been made. The woman on the monitor, laid out half-covered on the table, was unmistakably the same woman that gave us life. Devastation had officially set in.



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Did you get to see her or say any last words? How did that make you feel?



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What do you wish you got to say that you didn't or couldn't say to her?



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Shock! Denial:

STAGE ONE



This can't be life

The shock that overwhelmed my brother and me with the news of my mom's unexpected death quickly gave way to disbelief. There was no previous health concerns or terminal illness to blame. There was no tragic car accident or fatal shooting to explain why she had been taken from us without warning. There were only mysterious circumstances and a lot of unanswered questions we struggled to wrap our heads around. All we knew is that she ventured off on a routine homecare visit that morning and by nightfall was found dead inside her car in the parking lot of her patient's apartment complex. No one could tell us when exactly death seized her in its grip. At the time the jury was still out on the cause of death. Even as the details of her autopsy were released weeks later, how and why remained unclear.

Although her autopsy report gave a vague, inconclusive account of how my mother's life came to an end – I knew otherwise. She died of a broken heart. I witnessed the anguish, the turmoil, the undue guilt and depression she shouldered while mourning the loss of my grandmother. My mother asked my brother and me to answer my grandma's call for her loved ones in her dying moments. It was me that held my grandma's hand as she took her last breath. I saw the body bag shroud my grandma's frail body when the coroner's office came to take her away. Mom never had the opportunity to say good-bye and it ate at her.

Now to my disbelief, I shared in that same sentiment. I also didn't get a chance to say goodbye. There was no last opportunity to say "I love you." I kept expecting her to walk through our front door at any moment. Unfortunately for us, that would never happen again and our home never felt so empty. I never felt so alone.



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Did you experience any disbelief or denial after the initial shock from losing your _____ wore off?
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)

Have you looked for your _____ to return when you knew
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)
they weren't coming back?



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What kinds of dreams or nightmares did you have or have you had
about your _____ death, if any?
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)



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Anger:

STAGE TWO

On an emotional rollercoaster...

Anger. It's an emotion I've only felt at certain points in my life. As a youth, anger at an absent father and the burden he left upon my mother sent me down a path of dysfunctional, and imbalanced relationships as I grew into an adult. I often thought that if it wasn't for the morals and values my mom instilled in me, I would have been lost; yet quiet anger always burned inside of me. My mom was the moral compass that guided me as well as my safety net to fall back on when life threw me a curveball. Now with her abrupt departure, it felt like my heart had been ripped out of my chest and I was free-falling.

Some people direct their anger at God to deal with their loss and denounce their faith altogether. They pose questions like: How can a loving God take my loved one away? If God is all-powerful, how could he let my loved one die? Others internalize their anger or lash out at those around them to cope with their pain. Family and friends are easy targets for anger-fueled outbursts. I've been subjected to this form of misdirected anger while attempting to help my former fiance grieve the loss of his parents.

On the other hand, my anger had no specific target. I was angry at the length of time it took to determine the cause of death. Angry that the noticeable signs were warning of any present danger. Angry that my significant other at the time couldn't seem to fathom why my need for emotional support far outweighed my need for financial support. Given that his mother passed away at the beginning of our relationship, if anyone should have understood my emotional turmoil, it should have been him. Unfortunately, you can't pour from an empty cup and since he had yet to deal with his own parents' deaths, he had little to no comfort to offer me. Above all, I was angry that I couldn't be there for her in her final hour. She died alone -- without friends, without family, without me.



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What anger have you felt or that you currently battle with?



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Have you lashed out at loved ones or was your anger directed inward toward yourself?

Did you turn your back on God or stop believing in a higher power after losing your _____?
(mom/grandma/wife/sister etc)



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How will you Remember Her?

The *I Remember Her Project* immortalizes the women we've lost while remembering the legacy they've left behind. Gone but not forgotten, we hold them dear to our hearts and celebrate their memory. Mother. Wife. Daughter. Grandmother. Sister. Aunt. Friend. Through the *I Remember Her Project* her memory will live on.

Want to have her featured, visit www.irememberher.net to learn more or email us at irhproject@irememberher.net



Visit I Remember Her online



Scan the *I Remember Her* QR code to learn more about *I Remember Her*, to download our **10 Strategies for Coping with Grief** guide and shop our website.



In loving memory of
*Mary L. Brinkley, Varanda M. Brinkley, and
Gordon Alex Alexander. Without you this journal
would not be possible.*



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