



## **Death of a Partner or Spouse**

The unfathomable reality is beginning to set in. Your beloved partner or spouse has died. How can this day have arrived so soon, before either of you were ready? No matter how long you had been together, or how well you thought you were prepared for this moment, there were always more meals to be shared, kisses to be exchanged, hugs to be given, or words left unsaid.

You feel alone and adrift. Uncomfortable in your home one minute, you decide to go out and as soon as you are away, you crave the solace and safety of more familiar surroundings. Well-intentioned friends and family want to help and be supportive, but the person you really need to comfort you now is the very person whose death you are mourning.

### **This wasn't the way we planned it**

From the moment you “knew” that you and your partner were meant to be together, your life took on new meaning and definition. You built your world around each other and your relationship became an integral part of who you are. Your hopes and dreams for the future included the two of you as a couple. Now your world has been rocked by the fact that “we” has changed to “me”. You are involuntarily walking a path you had no intention of embarking upon so soon.

### **There is so much to do**

Filing taxes and legal documents, adjusting to new financial realities, assuming and relinquishing responsibilities, responding to the grief of other family members, making decisions alone instead of as a team. The “To Do” list seems endless. These tasks can be overwhelming at any time in your life, let alone now when your physical and emotional resources are already depleted.

### **Who am I now?**

*Widow? Widower? My “late” spouse? Single?*

These terms don't fit with your self-image. In the midst of the upheaval of your day-to-day life, you find yourself asking “*Who am I now without my other half?*” “*How will I go on without them?*” “*Am I destined to live the rest of my life alone?*” You find yourself unsure about your world and your place in it.

### **Following the Death of Your Partner or Spouse**

- The unpredictable nature of grief comes on like a tidal wave of emotion
- Your appetite is affected
- Your sleep patterns have changed
- Your muscles are weak
- Your heart aches because it has been broken in two
- You wonder how the tears can still keep flowing
- You may catch yourself daydreaming or unable to concentrate on activities that require your full attention
- You question meaning in life and why your partner had to die

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### **Helpful Actions**

- You may find it comforting to spend time with family, friends or colleagues sharing memories and reminiscing
- You may also need some time alone so that you can grieve privately
- You may want to dedicate a memorial space in your home with flowers or candles, a picture, or other mementos
- Ask for help when you need it
- Join with others in a support group to share grief and find hope
- Allow yourself to acknowledge how your partner lives on in you
- Hold on to the hope that your life will have meaning again
- Remember to be gentle with yourself and give your heart plenty of time to heal.

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