

# Widow Thoughts: Timeline of Grief

A Proverbs Plan



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*“Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.” Proverbs 27:1*

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Over the past 10 years, I have had the most random awkward comments said to me about my loss.

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*“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.”  
Proverbs 12:25*

*“Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”  
Proverbs 16:24*

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- **“At least you didn’t have kids.”** Lucky for me I got to cancel the fertility test I had scheduled for the week he passed.
- **“You’re young, you will find someone else.”** Maybe, but I still lost my person.
- **“Don’t you think when you move on, your new spouse wouldn’t appreciate your memorial tattoo?”** Then they aren’t the right person for me...
- **“You should get out more, don’t sit at home sad.”** Sure, I’ll go hang out random places alone.
- **“You shouldn’t go out as much, you are ignoring your loss.”** Roger that.
- **“You have your new husband now.”** Different people, not a divorce, and I didn’t trade in my husband.
- **“You’re still traumatized after remarrying?”** Head explodes.

Even the words of comfort can feel isolating.

- **“He’s in a better place.”** Sure, for him.
- **“You’ll see him again someday.”** When I’m dead so this is a moo-point (it’s a cow’s opinion, it’s just moo. It doesn’t matter. – Joey Tribbiani)
- **“I can’t imagine.”** No, you can’t.

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*“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23*

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You carry this heavy cloud of sadness and feeling of confusion around with you everywhere you go. When you walk in a room of people that know what happened to you, it's this overwhelming feeling that everyone there is pitying you or judging how you are coping. Even walking into a room of complete strangers you feel like you have this giant target on your head with words “recently widowed” for all to know so you find yourself thinking about your loss or feeling the need to explain it in some manner when having to interact.

What is hard to explain or for others to understand, is that in a split second, our whole world changed, and we are just trying to figure out how to just wake up in the morning and do simple tasks without the heavy cloud above us bursting into rain.



You start your day with an empty place in the bed that was once filled with the smile that greeted your day, pick out your clothes in a closet that holds their clothes and smell, sob through brushing your teeth, and have to pull it together to go to work and attempt to avoid bringing up the name of the person you were used to talking about in all of your stories. You don't get that good morning phone call anymore making sure you made it to work ok. The person you went home to after work to talk to about your day and spend your evenings with is no longer there, you go home to a quiet house and make dinner for one, alone. Clean up, alone. What was once split between two people is all on you. Try putting on a fitted sheet alone when you haven't had to tackle that battle on your own in 9 years. You watch your shows that you used to once watch with your best friend alone, and you go to bed alone and do it all over again and again until you eventually just feel numb inside and become a different version of who you once were.

Your family and friends expect the old you to come back, and that just isn't going to happen.

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*“A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.” Proverbs*

*17:22*

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From my experience, the timeline is all over the place. There isn't a 10-step program to mentally get past what you went through. There isn't a right way to grieve. There isn't a wrong way to grieve. There isn't an order in which your emotions should be felt to be magically healed. The loss of a spouse changes everything about how you think, how you feel, your goals, your friends and family dynamics, your ability to trust anything and not worry this won't happen again. The cloud you carry will never let a day go by that you don't think about your loss in some capacity.

So, what do you do to heal? How do you move on?

You figure out a way to carry the cloud and invite it along for the rest of your journey.

I have tried running away so many times from people or things that make me feel anything but happy because to feel anything else reminds me how easy I can get pulled back into the fog of that cloud and you eventually end up alone, without the support you need. It's not healthy, so stay and let them be the ones to leave if they can't deal with your emotions or where you are in your stage of grief. I have learned to just embrace the broken parts of me and try to show others how you can be happy and sad at the same time. It's hard to feel like yourself again, or a close version of what once was, without embracing the pain and just letting it come and go when it needs to. You must find YOU, to really find a way to let go of the pain.



A lot of times when you are married, your identity gets blurred or some of your goals get put lower on the list for new goals with your partner. I dated my first husband when I was 19, and I didn't really know who I was without him as we continued to grow a life together. When he passed, I had my career, but everything else shifted. Where I lived change, my relationships with friends and family changed, my relationship with his family changed, what I wanted from my life changed, and honestly, I changed. I really had to work to find myself emotionally, spiritually, creatively, etc. to find that sense of balance in my life to allow myself to be a better wife for my now husband, and mom to my son without this cloud hanging so low and let me tell you, it didn't happen overnight.

It will be 10 years since the loss of my first husband and I still don't have it all figured out. I'm growing through grief and trauma just as anyone else having gone through such a life event that shifts their life completely. Some days I am at peace, others I'm terrified it will happen again.

I have learned to embrace the days of peace, talk about that feeling and stay in environments you feel it most, and learn from the patterns of how you are processing your grief, so you get more of the days of peace, than those of fear or pain. When you find yourself going to a dark place, tap into what you love. Find a hobby, or something that is only yours and just zone out. For me, I love photography and nature. It's peaceful and my mind doesn't wonder as much hearing the sounds of birds fill the air with beautiful scenery around me. Maybe for you, that's reading a book, sitting with nature, crafting, having a side business, or whatever brings you joy. My biggest advice if you are going through such a loss is to let go of who you once were and embrace who you are now, cloud and all.

You only get one life, so honor your lost loved one by living your life to the fullest with no regrets. Don't let your past hold you back from your future because you were created to *live*.

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*"Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways."*

*Proverbs 4:25*

*"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Proverbs 3:5-6*

*"In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps."*

*Proverbs 16:9*

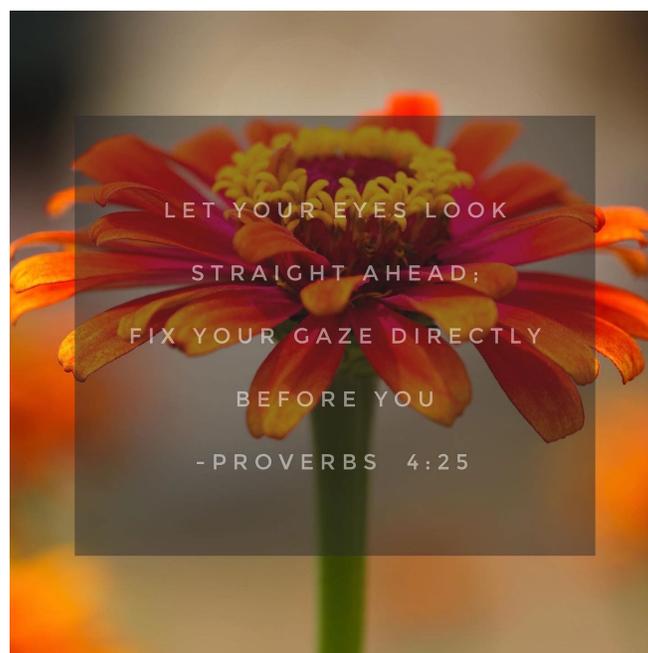
*"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."*

*Proverbs 27:17*

*"She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come."* Proverbs

*31:25*

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## Reflection

Read Proverbs, keeping in mind the verses called out within this plan.

Reflect on how you are feeling about your loss, and the change it had on your life. Now think on your emotions then, yesterday, and today. Your emotions might possibly be up and down, ever changing from one day to the next. Really take time to allow yourself to mentally go back to the life you lived before you felt split in two.

What do you miss most?

Are there things you don't miss?

Do you feel guilty for not missing a piece of the old you?

When you are used to growing with someone, it's not easy to see how much you have grown as an individual. Celebrate your wins and know it's ok to have growth, you can't allow time to stand still forever.

What wins have you had since the passing of your loved one?

Is there anything you think your loved one would be proud of you for?

What steps forward have you taken to process your loss and rebuild your life?

What new goals do you have for your life?

Have you talked to God about your loss?

What do you want God to know about how you are feeling, and what you need from him the most to keep moving forward?

I pray you continue to see your value in this world and that you can keep taking steps to move forward, even if they are small. If you fall behind, it's ok. It might be that your grief is telling you to slow down and process that emotion. If you aren't ready to process that emotion yet, put it away for a later day and keep moving forward. Grief has no timeline. What's important is that you know your life has purpose, with or without the person you thought would be part of your journey and God is always there to listen to what's on your heart and help you grow through it.

### Key verses

- Proverbs 3:5-6 | Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.
- Proverbs 4:25 | Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways.
- Proverbs 12:25 | Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up.
- Proverbs 16:24 | Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.
- Proverbs 16:9 | In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps.
- Proverbs 17:22 | A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
- Proverbs 27:1 | Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.
- Proverbs 27:17 | As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.
- Proverbs 31:25 | She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come.