

# H.O.P.E.

*Sent to you by*

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# H.O.P.E.

Helping Overcome and Provide Encouragement

## Dear friends,

In her wonderful book, *My Grandfather's Blessings*, Rachel Naomi Remen (pictured), an MD and counselor, tells of "Enid" – an older woman whose husband died suddenly two years earlier.



Enid's daughter brought her mother to Dr. Remen saying, "I lost both my parents the day my father died." By that she meant that her mother gave up on life when her husband died. She quit cooking, looking after her garden and her house – spending most of the time in her bathrobe staring out the window. Antidepressants prescribed by her physician didn't help, so she stopped taking them.

Dr. Remen and Enid first sat silently looking at each other. Breaking the silence, Dr. Remen asked why she had come. "My husband died. My daughters would like me to talk about it, but I do not think that I care to. Talking seems a waste of time. No one could possibly understand."

The counselor nodded in agreement. "Yes, of course, you have lost your life. Only your

Dr. Remen writes:  
"Every great loss demands that we choose life again. We need to grieve in order to do this. The pain we have not grieved over will always stand between us and life."

husband could understand what you have lost. Only he knew what your life together was like." Then, Dr. Remen asked, "if he were here, Enid, what would you tell him?"

That question opened a conversation as Enid began to speak to her husband out loud, telling him what life was like without him. After a few sentences, she began to cry, the first tears she shed since her husband died. Then, Dr. Remen asked Enid, "what would your husband say to you about the way you have lived the last two years of your life?"

Looking startled, the woman then responded, "why he would say 'Enid, why have you built a monument of pain in memory of me? My whole life was about love.'" At this point, Enid had a hint of a smile and Dr. Remen gently reminded her, "perhaps there are other ways to remember him." Enid acknowledged that truth saying she could see how she had betrayed her husband by

holding on to the pain and closing her heart. Enid never returned to see Dr. Remen but about a year later sent her a clipping from a local paper about a group of widows she had organized to help elderly people with tasks they needed assistance with. Enid was

no longer "stuck" in her grief. She had moved on, was helping others and finding joy and purpose in living again.

There are several important lessons all grievers can glean from Enid's experience.

1. It's possible to get "stuck" in grief and become frozen in the past.
2. When that happens, the person needs more than the help of friends. It's time to turn to professional help.
3. Working with a counselor skilled in grief work can be the key which empowers a bereaved person to do the proper sorting process, letting go of the past and shaping a new future.



Rx  
FOR  
GRIEF  
RELIEF

Four hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Greek philosopher and writer Euripedes wrote: "Oh to be a stone! To feel no grief!" Behind his comment is this reality: to be human is to grieve. Grief is the price of caring and loving. When we love someone and they die, we feel pain. That pain is called "grief."

*Rx continued on back...*

**...Rx FOR GRIEF RELIEF  
 continued from front**

Although we are pained by loss, there are steps we can take to ease the hurt and hasten the recovery. Here is a prescription for grief relief.

If you have a job, return as soon as possible. Work is a healthy, temporary distraction from the work of grieving. For a few hours each day, you can set grieving aside and focus on other tasks. On the other hand, if you were not employed, then find a job. Don't become discouraged by a lack of experience. Take an entry level job where you can learn new skills, gain job experience and build an employment history. Cultivate hope. For those times when days seem too long, nights endless and hope a distant memory, rinse your mind and fortify your spirit by reflecting on words of hope and inspiration such as these:

**GO  
 BACK  
 TO  
 WORK.**



*"It all depends on how we look at things, not how they are in themselves."*

- Carl Jung

*"It's not what happens to me that matters most; it's how I react to what is happening."*

- Robert H. Schuller

*"People can alter their lives by altering their attitudes."*

- William James

*"Wherever you go, go with your whole heart."*

- Confucius

*"Hope thinks nothing difficult; despair tells us that difficulty is insurmountable."*

- Isaac Watts

**ENROLL  
 IN A  
 CLASS.**



Not only will taking a class provide you with a healthy diversion from grieving, it also can supply you with practical

knowledge for improving the quality of your life. "The cooking class I took was a life-saver," said a recent widower. "My wife used to joke that I couldn't boil an egg. She was right. My first attempt produced a rubber ball!"

If you feel deficient in financial matters, take an accounting class. If you feel weak in the area of grief recovery issues, sign up for a class or seminar on that topic. Not only will you feed your mind, but you will make new friends by associating with other people who have a similar interest.

**VOLUNTEER  
 YOUR  
 TIME.**



Another effective way to get out of the house and provide yourself with grief relief is by volunteering. One widower saw a

newspaper ad requesting those over 50 to volunteer as docents and guides at an art museum. "I volunteered and now, my most pleasant hours are spent in that art institute. I'm in the presence of beauty, and I get to meet and interact with fascinating people," he says.

**TALK ABOUT  
 YOUR GRIEF  
 WITH A  
 FRIEND.**



Talking it out relieves the pressure, brings you perspective, and keeps you connected to others. Identify

someone you are comfortable with, someone who is a good listener, and then share your thoughts and feelings with that person. Shakespeare was wise when he wrote: "Give sorrow words – the grief that does not speak, whispers the over fraught heart and bids it break."

**GET  
 INFORMED.**



Read practical articles and books about grief.

Bereavement is a difficult, uncharted experience for most people. Gain insight by reading about the grief process. Since most grievers find it hard to concentrate, steer away from academic, textbook-type materials. It will be more helpful to read shorter, popular books and tightly written magazine articles.

**HONOR  
 YOUR  
 LOVED ONE  
 BY HELPING  
 OTHERS.**



Let the crisis of a death bring forth new ways of helping others. Mia Hamm is a world renown

soccer star. Less known about Ms. Hamm is the fact her beloved brother, Garrett, diagnosed with aplastic anemia, died while in his 30s. Initially devastated by his death, Ms. Hamm is now busy honoring her brother's memory two ways. First, she encourages people to become bone marrow donors (marrow transplants can be a cure for aplastic anemia and other diseases). Second, she promotes a new website, [www.helpingpeopleaffectedbyillness.com](http://www.helpingpeopleaffectedbyillness.com), which offers support for families of the chronically sick.

"I hope Garret would be proud of what I've accomplished," she says. "He gave me so many gifts along the way."