

Letter to My Loved One

From A. Brener
Mourning and Mitzvah

This form letter format is designed to stimulate a variety of feelings. Through it you will strive to maintain the intimacy you once shared or create an intimacy that may not have existed before the death. This letter is neither a eulogy nor a memorial. It should address the range of feelings you have toward the person you mourn: sadness, anger, love, yearning, words that remain unsaid.

It may be helpful to have a picture of your loved one there while you write. Allow yourself to absorb the image and the feelings generated within you. If you already know what needs to be said, just begin writing. If not, the guided statements may help you discover what you need to say.

Dear _____;

It has been _____ since your death and still the dialogue between us continues.

Length of time since the death

When I feel the need to communicate with you I

When I think of you I remember

The last thing I remember you did was

These memories make me feel

The biggest change for me, as a result of your death, has been

I hadn't expected that

I have learned that

During your lifetime, I wish that I could have told you

If you were alive

The biggest surprise has been

The hardest thing has been

The thing I fear the most is

I'd like you to know this about who I am now

In losing you I feel I have lost

I wish you could be here to help me with

I would like to ask you

What I always wanted to hear you say was

You didn't understand that

What I would have liked to know more about you was

I wish you could have understood

What you didn't see about me is

The thing I resent the most is

I am most grateful for

What I have learned about you only since your death is

The thing I feel most guilty about when thinking about you is

What I don't miss about you is

What I miss the most is

What I will emulate about you is

What I will do differently in my life from what you did in yours is

Despite the things that separate us, the things we share are

I hope that you now are

Signed, _____

These are tough questions. Painful feelings may have been stirred up which represent some of the most difficult aspects of your relationship with your loved one or the greatest pain of your loss of that person. These are the raw feelings of loss.

While writing the letter, one or two specific issues may have come up that clearly need to be addressed. You may want to work on these by continuing to write on any of the questions or on any other questions that have been raised in the process of writing this letter. Perhaps you might discuss what you have already written with others who knew the deceased or are familiar with your relationship with him or her.

Giving ourselves time to heal and creating space for the process allows the painful memories to be replaced gradually by less painful ones. The pain subsides and one remembers the whole relationship, not just the more recent memories of the illness and the death. We make peace with what was unresolved. The longing becomes less intense. Ultimately we reclaim our own lives.