

Purpose

When our child dies, a part of us dies, too. We are now faced with accepting our loss, coping with our pain and redefining our lives.

Our child helped to shape how we defined ourselves. Our child's life gave a dimension and purpose to our lives. Now that purpose has ended.

We define purpose differently during each stage of the grieving process. And finally, when we have accepted our child's death and have reshaped our lives, we will continue to seek and redefine purpose in our lives. For we are human beings and purpose is critical to reassembling our lives after our tragic and traumatic loss.

"Whatever is at the center of our life will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power."

Stephen Covey



Benchmarks

Good bye would be too difficult,
Although I know you are gone.
Instead, I keep you in my heart
And your memory lives on.

I have redefined my purpose, son,
Since you are no longer here.
With your death I faced a choice
To die, exist or to live free.

My life has changed forever, child,
I'm redefined each week,
You would call these "benchmarks"
Of goals set and then achieved.

And so I set my benchmarks,
Achieving many, reshaping some..
But everything is different now
Except your mother's love.

*Annette Mennen Baldwin
In memory of my son, Todd Mennen*

Finding, Defining & Refining
Purpose After the Death
Of Your Child

Finding, Defining & Refining
Purpose After The
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A Purpose For Each Day

Shock subsides and is replaced with deep, searing pain when your child dies. The process of accepting the death of your child must be managed by you, the parent, in a fashion that is unique to you as an individual.

The initial mourning process is very visible to all who see you. Your purpose during the mourning process is to allow the tears, the anger, the guilt, the pain and the horror of your loss to be displayed outwardly. Know that your mourning has a purpose and accept this purpose. Set guidelines and goals for yourself as you attempt to take a break from your mourning. Journal, read, do manual labor, soak in a tub, or watch a movie. Initially, your primary purpose is to mourn but you must not overload yourself. As the days fold one into another, you establish a secondary purpose: to take a break from your mourning.

Eventually the breaks from your mourning will get longer. The mourning period will end. The grief period will begin. New goals must be set as we move from mourning to grief. Grief is ever changing and never ending.



The Grief Journey.... Time Changes Our Purposes

As our outward mourning process lessens, the grief process begins. During the grief process we deal with a continually shifting paradigm.

Once again, establish purposes for yourself. Read about the stages of grief and understand that you cannot do this alone. A support group such as TCF, a private counselor, a good friend who has walked this road....these are necessary elements in the grief process. One purpose is to establish a long term support system.

Setting goals in the process is almost a daily thing. "Today I will" Select something that is pleasant to do....gardening, dining with friends, playing a round of golf, joining a family gathering, spending time with those you love. Your new goal is to achieve a purpose: that purpose is to transition throughout the rest of your life in your grief. You will find purpose in doing the things you must do such as work, shopping, cooking, cleaning, taking care of your home and lawn and vehicles. This will initially be a mammoth effort; as time moves forward you will be able to do these things with very few psychological roadblocks. But each day you must set yourself upon a task which lightens your burden, something that you enjoy. Once again, you must take a break as you are fragile now.

As you move into one year, two years, five years, 10 years and beyond in your grief, you will notice that your purpose is expanded into helping others, advancing your career, seeking deeper spirituality or knowledge, donating your time and your wisdom and many other activities that shape your "new life", the life without your child. This is not a race; do not compare yourself to others. You and your grief will always be unique.

Mourning Purposes Some Suggestions

- * Set aside time each day during the mourning process for a "pain break."
- * Check in with yourself once a day
- * Focus on your mourning, don't hide from it or pretend it doesn't exist
- * Allow mourning to take you where it will but bring yourself back periodically
- * Seek support from groups, private counselors and friends
- * Set up a routine as early in the mourning period as possible
- * Limit exposure to loud noise, sensory overload, violent movies, aggressive people and those who cannot understand mourning

Grief Purposes Some Suggestions

- * Do one happy thing each day
- * Reach out to others, help others either in a general or specific way
- * Plan special, low key events which bring you peace
- * Memorialize your child and talk about the happy times
- * Define & Accept your new identity
- * Gradually expand your activities
- * Don't overload yourself
- * Avoid negative, aggressive people
- * Be very, very gentle with yourself

