

Activities for Healthy Grieving

Continuing Bonds (CB) is the effort of maintaining an emotional connection with a deceased being, such as friends, family, partners, pets, etc. (Habarth et al., 2017). CB strategies work to transform their previous relationship, rather than ending their relationship (Habarth et al., 2017). Some might think that continuing a relationship post-mortem is unhealthy or it will cause more harm than good. Studies show that CB strategies are actually more comforting than distressing in most situations (Habarth et al., 2017).



Activity #1: ART

Use art as a way to express yourself when words are not enough (Nelson et al., 2022). This provides an opportunity for creative expression so the person may convey the love they have for the deceased. (Nelson et al., 2022)

Activity #2: LETTER WRITING

Write a letter to the deceased to let them know how you are feeling and what your time together means to you (The Ralph Site, 2022). This could be an opportunity to say anything you want them to know (The Ralph Site, 2022).



Activity #3: MEMORIAL

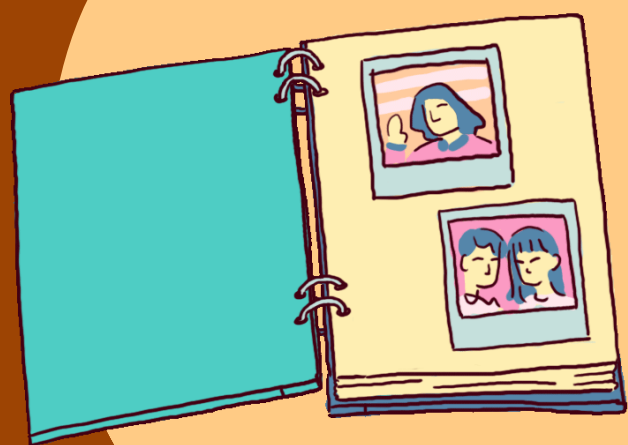
Create a memorial in the home that includes some of their belongings (Habarth et al., 2017). It needs to be easily visible because seeing it should elicit joy (Habarth et al., 2017). This might include a favorite shirt, jewelry, pet collar, photos, etc.(Habarth et al., 2017)



Activity #4: CELEBRATE

Continue celebrating their birthday and the life they lived (Habarth et al., 2017). This can be a small act where you light a candle for them or you take time to watch old videos of them (Habarth et al., 2017).

This would be a good time to look through old photo books with loved ones (Habarth. et al., 2017).



References

Habarth, J., Bussolari, C., Gomez, R., Carmack, B. J., Ronen, R., Field, N. P., & Packman, W. (2017). Continuing bonds and psychosocial functioning in a recently bereaved pet loss sample. *Anthrozoös*, 30(4), 651–670. <https://www-tandfonline.com.ezproxy2.library.colostate.edu/doi/abs/10.1080/08927936.2017.1370242>

Nelson, K., Lukawiecki, J., Waitschies, K., Jackson, E., & Zivot, C. (2022). Exploring the impacts of an art and narrative therapy program on participants' grief and bereavement experiences. *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying*, 302228221111726. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00302228221111726>

The Ralph Site. (2022, March 5). Staying connected: Your continuing bonds with a pet who has died | The Ralph site blog. Retrieved July 19, 2022, from <https://theralphsiteshop.com/staying-connected-your-continuing-bonds-with-a-pet-who-has-died/>

