From Grief to Peace

When we think of loss, the idea of finding meaning or anything beneficent from it seems contradictory. But whether it’s a breakup, divorce, or even death, there is more to be found, depending on how you hold the thoughts around it. Our intention is for you to expand your awareness and thinking to include love and understanding. We want you to feel your grief fully without getting stuck in the suffering. A broken heart is also an open heart. And although the pain of loss is a natural part of life, suffering doesn’t have to be. Our hope is for this book to bring you comfort and peace throughout your journey. We wish you much love and healing.

— Louise and David

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 HAY HOUSE

 YOU CAN HEAL YOUR HEART
Finding Peace After a Breakup, Divorce, or Death

LOUISE L. HAY
AND
DAVID KESSLER
YOU CAN HEAL YOUR HEART

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AND
DAVID KESSLER

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AUTHORS’ NOTE

We wrote this book to explore how we grieve and find healing after enduring any type of loss, such as a break-up, divorce, or death. Grieving is challenging, but it is our thoughts that often add suffering to our pain. We hope that this book will expand your awareness and thinking around loss to include love and understanding. Our intention is for you to feel your grief fully without getting stuck in the sorrow and suffering.

Grief is not a condition to be cured but a natural part of life. Spirit does not know loss; it knows that every story begins and every story ends, yet love is eternal. Our hope is that the words on these pages offer you comfort and peace throughout your journey. No book, however, should be used to replace professional help if that is needed. We wish you much love and healing.

— Louise and David
I’ve been working in the field of grief for most of my life. I’ve been fortunate to write four books on the subject, including two with the legendary Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, the renowned psychiatrist and author of the groundbreaking book *On Death and Dying*. During my lectures, I’m continually asked, “Does this grief work apply to divorce?” Even at parties, the newly single person will find me and ask, “Can you help me? I’ve just gone through a breakup and heard you know a lot about grief.”

It’s always a reminder that the work I do applies to the ending of relationships and marriages as well as the end of life. The truth is that loss is loss and grief is grief, no matter what it’s about or what caused it. I can’t count the times I’ve heard people talk harshly about themselves during a breakup or when a marriage has ended, and I’ve often thought back to my friend Louise Hay, author of the...
international bestseller *You Can Heal Your Life*, who always says, “Pay attention to your thinking.”

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In order to launch my latest book, *Visions, Trips, and Crowded Rooms*, I was invited to speak at a Hay House conference. Although my book was being released by Louise’s publishing company, I hadn’t seen her in years, and I was looking forward to spending some time with her. We’d planned to have lunch right after my presentation.

A few minutes after I’d begun, I could feel something happen in the audience, and I noticed people turning to one another and whispering. I had no idea what was going on, so I just continued speaking. Then it hit me: Louise had walked in and sat down. Despite her efforts to be unnoticed, she just carries that kind of energetic force with her.

At lunch, she and I caught up on mutual friends and what was new, and then she said, “David, I’ve been thinking about it, and I want you to be with me when I die.”

“I would be honored,” I replied immediately. Since I am a death and grief expert, it’s not unusual for me to get asked things like that. Most people don’t want to die alone; they want to know that their lives and deaths will be witnessed by someone who is comfortable with the end of life. To that end, the acclaimed actor Anthony Perkins asked me to be with him when he died. Best-selling author Marianne Williamson asked me to be with her and her father when he passed. And I was there when my mentor Elisabeth Kübler-Ross took her last breath.

Then I asked, “Is there anything going on? Something about your health that I should know about?”
“No,” she replied. “I’m 82, healthy as I can be, and I’m living my life fully. I just want to make sure that when the time comes, I live my dying fully.”

That is Louise.

During the conference, she was scheduled to screen a documentary called *Doors Opening*, which told the story of her famous Hayrides, weekly Wednesday night meetings for people with AIDS and their loved ones in the 1980s. This was where Louise Hay’s world and mine first came together. On the rare occasion that she missed a Wednesday night, I’d fill in for her. And what a thrilling ride it was!

Picture 350 or so attendees, mostly men (and some women) with AIDS. Those were the early days of the epidemic, before treatments became available. For the most part, these people were dealing with a catastrophic event in their lives. And there was Louise, sitting in the midst of it all, not seeing it as catastrophic, but as a life-changing opportunity. During the meetings, she invited a healing energy into the room. Yet she also made it perfectly clear that this was not a pity party—there was no room to be a victim. Rather, these meetings provided a chance to achieve deeper healing: a healing of the soul.

My mind flooded with memories as I recalled those inspiring, magical evenings. Now, more than 25 years later, Louise and I were once again in a room together, reflecting on those days and the profound impact it had on our lives. When the documentary began, after a brief introduction, Louise grabbed my hand, and we started to walk down the aisle. Our plan was to talk and catch up more and then return when the film was over to conduct a question-and-answer session with the audience. We were halfway to the door when she paused.
“Oh, look,” Louise said. “There’s Tom on the screen.” Tom was an original Hayride member who had long since died.
“Everyone is so young,” I said.
“Let’s sit for a couple of minutes,” she whispered as she pulled me into the back row.

We ended up watching the whole documentary. Afterward we got up, composed ourselves, walked onto the stage, and the questions began: “What is sickness?” “If thoughts can create healing, why do we take medicine?” “Why do we die?” “What is death?”

Every answer that Louise provided gave information and insight into what illnesses are. Then she would give me a nod to interject my thoughts, as if we were playing tennis and she was volleying the ball to me. Our 10-minute Q&A lasted 45 minutes and probably could have gone on for another few hours. And just when I thought the talk was over, Louise proudly announced to everyone, “Oh, I’ve arranged for David Kessler to be with me when I die.” The audience applauded. What I thought had been a private request, Louise was now sharing with the world. That was an example of her power, honesty, and openness.

That evening, Reid Tracy, the president and CEO of Hay House, told me, “Louise and I were talking about the two of you doing something together. You share a common history and can offer a lot of wisdom. We think you should write a book together.” I could only imagine Louise Hay sharing her insights on healing regarding one of life’s greatest challenges—whether it’s coming to terms with the end of a relationship through divorce or a breakup, facing the death of a loved one, or enduring the many other types of loss, such as the loss of a beloved pet or even a beloved job. Louise’s wise words, Pay attention to your thinking, flashed through my mind once again. What if she and
I wrote a book together that incorporated her affirmations and knowledge about how our thinking can heal ourselves, with my years of experience in helping others cope with grief and loss?

I thought about how many people a book like this could help. I also thought about what it would be like to work so closely with Louise on such an important topic. It turns out that our collaboration on this book was as seamless as our Q&A session at the conference—adding our own insights picked up over the years while also completing and complementing each other’s thoughts on various subjects’.

And so our journey together began.

* Please note that aside from this Preface and Chapter 1, where I describe the start of our writing process together and share our initial conversations, the voice throughout this book belongs to both Louise and me.
A broken heart is also an open heart. Whatever the circumstances, when you love someone and your time together ends, you will naturally feel pain. The pain of losing a person you love is part of life, part of this journey, but suffering doesn't have to be. Although it’s natural to forget your power after you lose a loved one, the truth is that after a breakup, divorce, or death, there remains an ability within you to create a new reality.

Let’s be clear here: We’re asking you to change your thinking after a loss occurs—not to avoid the pain of grief, but to keep moving through it. We want your thoughts to live in a place where you remember your loved one only with love, not with sadness or regret. Even after the worst breakup, the meanest divorce, and the most tragic death, it is possible to achieve this over time. That doesn’t mean that you deny or run away from the pain. Instead, you let yourself experience it and then
allow a new life to unfold—one where you hold the love dear, not the sorrow.

Here’s where our real work begins. There are three main areas we’ll be focusing on throughout this book:

1. Helping You Feel Your Feelings

If you’re reading this book, then you’re most likely hurting—and that’s something we don’t wish to take away from you. But this time can be a vital window, not only to heal your pain, but, if you feel each of your feelings fully, to also begin to release it. One of the biggest problems is that you might try to push aside or ignore your feelings. You judge them as wrong, too little, or too much. You carry a lot of bottled-up emotions, and anger is often one that is suppressed. In order for it to heal, however, it must be released.

We’re not speaking only about anger associated with death, but about anytime we feel anger. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, the renowned grief expert who identified the Five Stages of Grief, said that we could feel anger, let it pass through us, and be done with it in a few minutes. She went on to say that any anger we feel over 15 minutes is old anger.

Of course anger is only one of the emotions that arise. When a relationship ends, when divorce happens, and even when a death occurs, we are left with so many feelings. Feeling them is the first step toward healing.
2. Allowing Old Wounds to Come Up for Healing

Your loss will also be a window into your old wounds, and like it or not, they are going to come forth. Some of them you may not be aware of. When you’re going through a breakup, for example, you may think, *I knew he wasn’t going to stay.* In a divorce, you may believe that *I don’t deserve love,* or when a loved one dies that, *Bad things always happen to me.* These are negative thoughts that stretch beyond the current loss.

It’s certainly helpful to take advantage of grief as a time to reflect on the past with tenderness—but to relive it over and over is painful and nonproductive. That’s what you tend to do when you just go back without an intention of healing.

Where did these negative thoughts originate? The answer is that they originated in the past and weren’t healed with love. Together we’ll shine a light on those old wounds and negative thought processes and begin the healing process with love and compassion.

3. Changing Distorted Thinking about Relationships, Love, and Life

When you grieve any loss, you apply your current thinking, which, at its best, is often distorted. What do we mean by that? It is when your beliefs are colored by the wounds of childhood and shaped by hurts from past relationships. Distorted thinking is often molded by your parents and others in your life who did the best they could, but also carried their own distorted thinking from their childhoods. All of this worked together to form the current self-talk in your mind as you think
your same old thoughts over and over again. Then you bring this old thinking, the negative self-talk, to your new loss.

This is why human beings so often talk to ourselves without love and tenderness after we’ve just lost someone we cared for deeply. We blame ourselves, we throw a pity party, and we even feel that we deserve the pain we’re now experiencing. How do we break the cycle? Read on to learn about the importance of positive affirmations and their powerful effect on distorted thinking.

The Power of Affirmations to Heal Grief

Affirmations are statements that reinforce a positive or negative belief. We want to raise your awareness of the negative ones you might use and gently invite new, positive ones into your life. In your thinking, you’re always affirming something. Unfortunately, when your thinking is distorted, you’re usually repeating negative affirmations.

We’re going to lovingly introduce positive affirmations to your grief and your life. These positive statements may feel untrue when you first use them. Let them in anyway. You may be afraid that we’re trying to take away your grief or diminish it in some way, but that couldn’t be further from the truth. Your grief is yours to feel, but positive affirmations can take away your suffering as well as heal some of your old pain and negative thought patterns. Your negative affirmations are untrue, yet you have no trouble feeling those. Many people unconsciously repeat negative affirmations, being so cruel to themselves when they’re hurting. One of the main
Introduction

goals we hope to accomplish in this book is finding a way to change that repetitive negative thinking for good.

As you read the positive affirmations in the upcoming chapters, be sure to apply them to your own experiences. Apply them to your thought patterns—your beliefs, how you view the world—using them to undo your limited, negative thinking. Some affirmations may resolve your old wounds from the past to help you process your current ones so that you can finally fully heal with love.

The Gift of Life after Loss

We’re sure you know how to end a relationship. You know how to end a marriage. You even know how to end a life. But do you know how to complete a relationship or a marriage? Do you know how to complete a life? This is another aspect we hope to teach you as we journey together. There are unexpected gifts to be found in life after loss.

These may seem like new concepts to you, but the truth is that not all relationships are meant to last. Some will last a month, others a year, some a decade. You’ll feel pain when you believe the one-year relationship should have lasted five years. You feel pain because you think the 10-year relationship should have lasted 25 years. The same is true of marriages. Can you think of a marriage as a success when it ends in divorce? Well, it can be. It can be perfect for the experience that you and your spouse needed.

Even when life ends, there is a rhythm. It is sad, of course, because you want more time with your loved one—that’s only natural. But there are only two
requirements for a complete life: a birth day and a death day. That’s it. We all arrive in the middle of the movie, and we leave in the middle of it. We want to hold on to the connection to our loved one who died; we want to keep our memories . . . and we can eventually release the pain.

We’ll get started by examining our thoughts around loss in Chapter 1. What are your thoughts about breakups? How do you feel about marriages ending? How do you respond when a loved one dies? As we take you through these questions, we’ll help you begin to change your thoughts about loss.

In Chapter 2, we move on to relationships. Even though you may be reading this book in the midst of a breakup, others may be in the throes of a divorce or a death. Regardless of your current situation, we encourage you to read this chapter because every marriage and every divorce started with a relationship. Every death is also about a relationship.

Chapter 3 focuses specifically on the grief of a divorce. And then, in Chapter 4, we’ll look at grief after a loved one dies. In the same way we suggested that you read the relationship chapter, we also suggest that you read the chapter on death, because every breakup and every divorce is also a death on a certain level.

In the remaining chapters, we’ll spend time exploring the many other types of losses that we experience in our lifetime, from the loss of a pet, to the loss of a job, to the loss of a pregnancy, and much more. We’ll even examine ways of healing the types of losses that aren’t so easily seen on the surface, such as grieving something in life that never was and never will be.
Introduction

The following pages contain new thinking, heart-warming stories, and powerful affirmations geared to specific situations. The stories throughout are taken from real people in real situations who have lovingly chosen to share their life challenges and lessons with us so that we could share them with you.

Our ultimate wish is for you to discover that no matter what you’re facing, you can heal your heart. You deserve a loving, peaceful life. Let’s begin this healing process together.

— Louise and David
On my drive to San Diego for my first work meeting with Louise, I thought about what questions I would ask. Louise is known for saying, “Thoughts create.” How would that apply in loss? I thought about the breakup of a relationship. I also thought about loss in death, recalling a dear friend who was grieving the sudden, unexpected passing of her husband. I wanted to hear Louise’s opinion on this situation. After all, she is practically the mother of the New Thought movement.

A pioneer in mind-body healing, Louise Hay was one of the first to introduce the connection between physical ailments and their corresponding thought patterns and emotional issues. Now I would be asking her to bring her
wisdom, experiences, and insights to this most challenging
time in a person’s life. Even though I had already written
four books on the subject myself, I forever remain a stu-
dent. I mean, honestly, how could anyone say they know
everything about loss?

Louise herself has written so many books and so many
meditations that I was eagerly anticipating her unique
perspective on this important topic. Soon after I rang the
doorbell to Louise’s condo, there she was with her ever-
endearing hug, inviting me into her home. She showed
me around as I admired her surroundings. I immediately
felt that this wonderful home with its plush furniture and
myriad mementos she’d collected from her extensive trav-
els to remote parts of the world was befitting a woman of
Louise’s stature.

I was gazing out at the stunning views from her win-
dows when she turned to me and said, “Shall we talk over
lunch? There’s a great place around the corner.”

Within moments, I was walking arm in arm down the
streets of San Diego with Louise Hay. No one would have
ever guessed that we were about to discuss one of the most
painful subjects in the world as we ate. When we sat, I saw
the waitstaff’s faces light up at Louise’s presence. “You’re
going to love the food here,” she assured me.

After we placed our order, I took out my recorder.
“Louise,” I said, “I’ve written so much about the medical,
psychological, and emotional aspects of loss and grief. I’ve
also touched on the spiritual aspects in each of my books.
While I was at a bookstore the other day, I thought about
this book and realized that it would be one of the few that
is devoted to deeply exploring the spiritual side of relation-
ships ending, divorce, death, and other losses. So tell me
your beginning thoughts on these spiritual aspects.”
“Our thinking creates our experiences,” she began. “That doesn’t mean the loss didn’t happen or that the grief isn’t real. It means that our thinking shapes our experience of the loss.”

She continued, “David, since you say we each experience grief differently, let’s explore why.”

I told Louise about my friend whose husband had died suddenly from a brain bleed. But Louise surprised me when she didn’t ask about the nature of my friend’s loss. Instead, she said, “Tell me about her thinking. We each feel differently because we have different thoughts about our grief. Her thinking is the key.”

I caught myself wanting to ask, “How would I know what she was thinking?” But then I realized where Louise was going. “Oh,” I said, “her words, her actions, and her grief would reflect her thoughts.”

Louise put her hand on mine and smiled. “Yes!” she replied. “Tell me some of the things she says.”

“Oh. Some of the things I’ve heard are: ‘I can’t believe this is happening,’ ‘This is the worst thing that has ever happened,’ and ‘I will never love again.’”

“Good,” Louise said. “She’s telling us a lot. Let’s just take a statement like ‘I will never love again.’ You know how important I believe affirmations are. Affirmations are positive self-talk, so think about what she’s saying to herself in grief. I will never love again. That statement can create reality. But more important, it doesn’t serve her or her loss. The pain of grief is one thing. Our thoughts then add to the suffering. Out of her pain she may feel like she will never love again. But if she was open to some other ways, some suggestions, she could delve into the underlying beliefs about her statement. Some other thoughts could be:
I have experienced a powerful love in my life.

This love I feel for my husband is clearly showing me that it’s everlasting.

I am reminded of my love for him, and my heart continues to sing.”

I added, “For people who want to go deeper quicker or have moved further in time away from the death, they might say:

I am open to loving again.

I am willing to experience love in all of its forms while I’m still alive.”

Louise leaned in and said, “I hope you realize that we don’t say these things only after the death of a loved one. We say these things in our relationship breakups and divorce, too. So let’s make sure we examine all of those areas.”

As Louise and I talked, I thought about how there are people who always take the negative path, yet there are also those who do their best to end things well in relationships and find the positive. Take, for example, Darren and Jessica. Darren saw religion as something for his parents and his family, not something that he had chosen for himself. But then he and Jessica discovered religious science and began attending a local church.

“The sermons covered familiar, everyday topics,” Darren said, “like buying a home, falling in love, getting
married, managing money, and much more, but always with no judgments. Only acceptance and wisdom. This spiritual talk was about a far-more expansive love than what Jessica and I were raised with. As the years passed, we would read books, meditate, and go to workshops. The joke was that years later we realized that our adage, ‘Karma sees all,’ was a lot like our parents’ Golden Rule.”

After 22 years of what had seemed to him to be a good marriage, Darren felt that something had changed in the relationship. As Jessica explained to me later, “Life seemed half over and yet underexplored fully. I felt it first. I wanted out, I wanted more. It wasn’t about sex or affairs. It was just that I had signed up for a lifelong commitment without fully understanding how long life was and how much there was to do. I loved Darren, but he was happy being at home doing nothing and just relaxing. The slower life that suited Darren was boring for me.

“When I told him that I wanted our relationship to end in its current form and I wanted out, he was furious. He felt I had betrayed him. He took it personally, but it wasn’t personal. He accused me of not loving him anymore, but that wasn’t true. I did still love him, but the reality was that our romantic relationship was over. I knew that if I stayed, both of us would become very unhappy. It was sad, but I had to go.”

The truth is that all of us are always moving toward exploring the wounds that need healing. Our progress may not always be obvious or smooth, but love will deliver everything unlike itself to our doorstep for healing. So while Darren perceived heartbreak from the split, his wife felt not fear or hurt but an overwhelming sense of adventure. As she packed her bags, she gently wiped the tears from his face and said, “You think I’m leaving you, but I’m not. I’m
moving out, but I’ll still be in the world with you. You think I don’t love you but I do, and this is what is best for both of us. I know on some level that if it’s right for my future, then it must be right for yours.”

Darren remained hurt and angry. “Just admit it,” he said. “You don’t love me anymore.”

Jessica replied, “Sometimes saying good-bye is another way of saying I love you.”

It was stories like theirs that often didn’t get retold in the breakup world. I often ponder how little we know about ending things like relationships, marriages, and jobs. We just don’t know how to complete them, and it’s hard to accept that while every relationship has a beginning, some of them also have endings.

Honoring the Love

Louise and I were deep in discussion about dealing with grief when our food arrived. Smiling, she looked at her meal and smelled it; then she gave thanks, which felt more genuine and deeper to me than the typical grace we utter out of obligation or habit.

“You really meant that, didn’t you?” I asked when she was finished praying.

“Yes,” she told me, “because life loves me, and I love life. I am so thankful.”

I must admit that, at first, this felt a little over the top. But then I remembered whom I was sitting with—the one person who has proven time and again that affirmations work. I’d just been caught off guard as I saw this tool actually playing out in Louise’s life. She savored every bite of her lunch as she explained to me that affirmations are not about pretending that grief doesn’t exist. “It doesn’t go
Changing Our Thoughts about Loss

away if you pretend it isn’t there. What do you think happens to it?”

“If you’re not ready to experience it,” I said, “I believe it will remain on hold for you to deal with when you’re ready. If not now, then later. The timing is your choice, and there are periods when we need to shelve our grief. It may be too soon, too painful; or maybe you’re too busy raising a child or holding on to a job. Whatever your situation, there will come a time when grief has sat too long on the shelf. It will become old, unattended, angry, and will begin to impact your life in a negative way. But that doesn’t have to be your reality.”

Louise nodded. “You have the power within you to create a new, more positive reality. When you change your thoughts about grief and loss, it doesn’t mean you won’t feel the pain or you won’t go through the grief. It just means that you won’t get stuck in any one feeling. When people look back on loss, they often say that they’re glad they felt their emotions fully. They’re glad they gave themselves time to fully mourn the end of the relationship. Or if a loved one died, they’re glad they honored their grief afterward. However, I’ve frequently heard people say after an extended grieving period that ‘I didn’t need to give the pain as much time as I did.’”

We then talked about a 29-year-old woman named Caroline who was just getting back into the dating scene. She said she didn’t regret any relationship she’d had, but she did regret taking the last five years to get over a three-year relationship.

“I see that,” I said. “A woman once shared with me that nearly a decade after her husband had died in an auto accident, she realized that she would miss him and love him for the rest of her life. But she would rather have learned
sooner to remember their love. When she and I were nearly finished working together, she told me, ‘Honoring the love—that’s what I’m going to do from here on out. No more honoring the pain.’”

“That’s what we want to teach. We want to honor the love, not the pain and not the suffering.” Louise looked directly into my eyes and continued. “In this book, we’ll teach about intentions. The work will be about affirmations applied to grief and loss. It will bring hope to sorrow. We can teach people that they can go from grief to peace, and show them how to do it. They can heal their losses and their hearts. It doesn’t have to hurt for the rest of their lives, but they aren’t going to get there in a day.”

“Very true,” I replied. “Healing from loss isn’t like getting a cold and a week later, you’re better. Healing takes time, but we can teach people to say that they’re looking forward to peace. The grief before the peace is extremely important because it is an authentic expression of your feelings as you build a new foundation, a stronger one.”

I often think about Kübler-Ross’s Five Stages of Grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Healing your heart is about ultimately finding acceptance and living in reality. I’m not suggesting you’ll be glad that a loss has happened or say that it’s okay. But you have to acknowledge the reality of it, even though all you want is your loved one back.

I shared the following story with Louise:

Christina was a young woman who was diagnosed with early-onset ovarian cancer. It was very aggressive, and it seemed like everyone in her life was trying to deal with the
news when things shifted to the fact that she was dying. In an unusual twist, sometimes people who are very young find it easier to accept death than their parents do. In Christina’s case, it was her mother, Debra, who was struggling to keep up with the events that were happening. Christina was an interesting, brave soul who had an insight into her world about what she could change and what she could not. She knew that she was dying and accepted it, which brought her a certain kind of peace.

During her illness, she and her mother would often argue. Debra would say, “You’re just too young to die.”

“Well, how do you explain the fact that I’m dying?” was Christina’s reply.

“You life is incomplete; you can’t die so young.”

“Mom, there are only two requirements for a complete life: birth and death. Soon my life will be complete because I will have lived and I will have died. That’s just the way it is, and we have to find peace in it.”

If anything kept Christina up at night, it was worrying about her mother. After Christina passed, I would see Debra every few months, and I still think about how Christina wanted peace so much for her mother, and yet it eluded her. But years later, I ran into Debra and immediately sensed a shift that I couldn’t explain. I asked her if anything had changed, and she told me, “I admitted that I wanted Christina back more than I wanted peace. Eventually, I realized that I wanted peace for myself and for Christina. I finally understood what it meant to want someone you love to rest in peace.”

“To this day,” I told Louise, “Christina and Debra always remind me of how important it is to want that peace.”

Louise agreed. “We forget to feel and understand the words from our upbringing. Think about those words rest.
in peace. We’ve all heard them, but in Debra’s situation, she ultimately wanted her daughter to find that peace, knowing that love is eternal and never dies. And likewise, Christina would have wanted her mother to rest in peace every night as well, acknowledging the bond that death cannot sever. Now Debra rests in her firm belief that they will one day see each other again.”

Whatever kind of loss your grief stems from, it’s vital to hold the thought of wanting to find peace and to find a healing of the heart. It is comforting and powerful to know that fully grieving and finding peace is always an available option. In fact, this book contains a number of options that you may not have considered before, including challenging your thoughts and using affirmations to change unhealthy thought patterns.

Just remember that healing your loss and your heart is possible. People do it successfully all the time, but you must always keep in mind that your grief is as unique as your fingerprint. You must recognize your loss and your grief in order to heal your heart fully. People often get mad at friends who don’t understand their loss. They may not and perhaps never will, but only you can truly appreciate your loss because it is you and you alone who can heal it.

**Different Kinds of Loss**

Most people are surprised to learn that there are many different types of loss. “Loss is loss,” they say, and that is true on one level; however, since there are so many kinds of specific losses, it’s worth looking at the archetypes.

In the remainder of the chapter, we’ll focus on complicated loss, loss in limbo, and disenfranchised grief. It’s important to remember that grief is a reaction to those losses.
While we don’t want to dwell in the intricacies of the types, understanding what kind of loss you’re experiencing can sometimes help you find your “best self” in the situation.

**Complicated Loss**

To put it simply, *complicated loss* is any loss that is complicated by other factors. Most of us know that we will experience loss when a relationship naturally ends. When two people mutually agree on separation and divorce, that is an uncomplicated loss. When the death of an elderly relative happens in an expected way after a good, long life, that is an uncomplicated loss. How many of these are there? How often does everyone agree, and how often do things end well?

Everyone’s lives are complicated, and so are their losses, of course. Losses become complicated when you don’t expect them to happen. In other words, this loss was a surprise. While you may name it, and it may well be a complicated loss, no matter how complex, the possibility for healing is always there. Let’s look at some examples of how we can change our thinking.

In a relationship, when one person wants a separation and the other one doesn’t, you may want to add this to your thinking:

> While I don’t understand this separation now, I will accept it as reality so healing can begin.

This same thinking can be used with divorce:

> I don’t believe we need to divorce, but my husband wants it [or, my wife has filed the papers]. While
I don’t agree with it, I do believe that we choose our own destiny, and my partner has chosen his.

Everyone has a right to choose to be in a marriage or not.

When someone dies young, you might say to yourself:

I didn’t see this death coming. I believed this person had more to experience in life, but I remind myself that I do not see all or know all. While I may have feelings of anger and confusion, I don’t know what anyone’s journey is supposed to be.

Remember that while the loss may be complicated, the healing doesn’t have to be.

**Loss in Limbo**

Here are some examples of loss in limbo: after the third break in a relationship, a couple might say, “The separation is killing us. We wish we could make this work or finally end it for good.”

Some helpful affirmations may be:

*This separation will reveal helpful information.*

*This relationship will grow or end in its own time.*

Individuals dealing with serious, ongoing health-care issues might say, “The days spent waiting for test results are excruciating,” or “I either want to completely get better or die.”

A good affirmation to use may be:
Changing Our Thoughts about Loss

*My health is not solely defined by a test result.*

Wondering if there is going to be a loss can feel as bad as the loss itself. Life sometimes forces you to live in limbo, not knowing if you will experience loss or not. You may have to wait several hours to hear if your loved one’s surgery went well, or days until a loved one is out of a coma. You may wait in limbo for hours, days, weeks, or longer when a child is missing. The families of soldiers who are missing in action are often wrenched by decades of living in limbo. And years later, those left behind still haven’t resolved their losses and may not be able to do so until they learn the truth. But that information may never come. Being in the limbo of loss is, in itself, a loss.

It doesn’t have to be that way, however. In the storm, you can find a port. During the limbo of loss, you’ll probably scare yourself with the worst possible outcomes. You don’t know how you’ll survive if this loss actually happens. In these situations, you can become paralyzed and are no help at all to others or yourself. A healing affirmation for this situation is:

*Even though I do not know the whereabouts of my loved one, I trust that he or she is safely cared for in the loving hand of God.*

In a breakup, for example, you might think, *I must get him back; I’m not ready for this to end.* Well, think again! What if instead you said to yourself:

*I may not know the outcome, but life loves me, and I will be fine with him or without him.*
If you’re having a hard time breaking up with someone, try saying this to yourself:

*If I am not the one for her, someone else is!*  
*Let me get out of the way so that they can come together.*

**Disenfranchised Grief**

Disenfranchised grief is the result of a loss for which people do not feel they have a socially recognized right to grieve. Disenfranchised grief is often not openly mourned or approved of. Some examples are:

- The relationship is not socially approved of or publicly recognized, such as a gay or lesbian relationship or marriage.  
  Try thinking:

  *Regardless of what others think about my love,  
  I honor my love and my loss.*

- The relationship exists primarily in the past: for example, the deceased is an ex-wife or ex-husband.  
  Try thinking:

  *Even though my loved one is my ex, my feelings of love are not just in the past, but also in the present.  
  I will fully grieve my love for him or her.*
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• The loss is hidden or not easy to see. Hidden losses include abortion or miscarriages.  
  Try thinking:

  *I see and honor the loss of my child.*

• There is a stigma connected to how the person died. This could be a death that appears to have an element of poor decision making or what some consider sin. Suicide, AIDS, alcoholism, or drug overdose are all examples.  
  Try thinking:

  For suicide: *My loved one was in pain and could not see a way out. I now see him as whole and at peace.*

  For AIDS: *My loved one is beautiful and worthy, regardless of her illness.*

  For alcoholism and/or drug addiction: *My loved one did the best he could. I remember him before he was addicted, and I see him now without his addiction.*

• The loss of a pet sometimes isn’t shared because of the fear of ridicule.  
  Try thinking:

  *The love I have for my pet is very real. I will only share my grief with those who will understand my loss.*
Remember, when it comes to disenfranchised grief, you can’t change other people’s thinking, but you can always change your own.

\[ I \text{ honor my losses.} \]

As you see, there are different names for different types of losses. While each one of us grieves in a unique way, the experience of loss is universal. It is important to note then, that if loss is universal, so is healing. While you often have no control over a breakup, divorce, or death occurring, you do have complete control over the thinking that follows. You can create an experience of fully feeling the grief and desiring the healing, or you can become a victim of the pain. Affirmations are a valuable tool that can steer your thoughts toward healing and away from suffering.

Let’s now take a closer look at loss through a breakup in a relationship and learn how to focus our thoughts on healing, as well as ways to break through negative beliefs so that we can manifest greater love for ourselves in the future.
When people think of loss, the idea of finding meaning or anything beneficial from it seems contradictory. But whether it’s a breakup, divorce, or even death, there is more to be found, depending on how you hold the thoughts around it. It’s not that you can stop the loss from occurring; it’s that your thoughts change everything that comes after the loss.

Grief is a matter of the heart and soul. Grieve your loss, allow it in, and spend time with it. Suffering is the optional part. Remember that you come into this world in the middle of the movie, and you leave in the middle; and so do the people you love. But love never dies, and spirit knows no loss.

Since your thinking shapes the experience of your loss, why not make your intention to have a tender, loving experience of grief? And keep in mind that a broken heart is an open heart.
Let your thinking manifest hope to your sorrow. Choose your thoughts wisely. Be kind to yourself, and reflect on the loss with love. If you’re grieving the death of a loved one, remember how you loved them when they were present; know that you can continue loving them in their absence. You can go from grief to peace.

Endings are also beginnings. We encourage you to use the affirmations and teachings throughout the book not only while working through a loss, but also in every aspect of your life. Pay attention to your thinking, and change it in areas that you don’t have peace. By doing so, you’ll bring more happiness into your life and to those around you.

Hard times can serve as a reminder that our relationships are a gift. Loss can remind us that life itself is a gift. And don’t forget to love yourself. You deserve it. You are a gift.

*I love life, and life loves me.*

*I have lived and loved.*

*I am healed.*

~
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