

Connecting With a Loved One on the Other Side

5 PRACTICES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR
NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR
DEPARTED LOVED ONE.



Something people don't tell you about experiencing a loss is that your relationship with your loved one does not end.

It transforms.

Everything is in a constant state of change, whether we realize it or not. Your loved one has changed forms.

Yes, there was a death: the death of the physical form.

But your loved one is not dead, or gone.

They are still right here with you.

But how can that be possible when you can't see them, feel them, touch them, or hear them?

This is where your new relationship with your loved one begins.

Of course, it's not the relationship you wanted or imagined.

It's not the relationship you would have preferred over having them here in their physical form.

And yet, this is your reality now. This is what happened.

Making the decision to continue a relationship with a departed loved one is a brave act. It can be painful, because it requires acknowledging the loss, but it can also be extremely meaningful.

So you've made the decision that you want to do this.

You want to continue to honor and grow that relationship, even though you'd give anything to have them back in their body.

The following 5 practices will help you on your journey to strengthening that spiritual bond with your loved one.



1. Start a Mediation Practice.

If you don't already have a mediation practice in place, your grieving process is an excellent time to start.

I know, I KNOW. Meditation can feel intimidating, impossible, and like a waste of time. As someone who has been resistant to mediation for many years, I understand how challenging this practice can feel.

Plus, who has time to sit there and meditate?

This practice is going to be instrumental to connecting with your loved one, so please hear me out.

First, it's helpful to understand what meditation is not.

Meditation is NOT an attempt to control your thoughts or create a specific experience. You have to let go of control if you want to reap the benefits of meditation.

Here's what meditation is:

- Observing your thoughts and body sensations, especially your breathing.
- Gently focusing on a desired outcome, if you wish (such as connecting with a loved one).
- Just *being*, not *doing*.

So why is meditation so important for connecting with a loved one?

Meditation gives you the physical and mental space to have a mindful experience with your loved one.

Think of it as inviting your loved one to have tea with you. You can even make a cup of tea for your meditation session (or coffee, if that's your thing).

You have to show up to the meeting for it to actually happen. And not just show up physically. You must show up mentally, emotionally, and spiritually too.

Think of it as meeting a friend and being fully present for your meeting because you want to really take it in and savor every moment with them.

So how do you show up?

The following is my recommended process, but please, choose what works for you!

1. Choose a time of day when you feel most centered. I recommend after exercise, before your caffeine kicks in (or after it has worn off), or when you are winding down for the day. The goal here is to choose a time when you will be awake, alert, and calm (not sleepy, anxious, or jittery).

2. Find a quiet space where you can get comfortable. Personally, I find that sitting during meditation can be uncomfortable, so I try to lie down if I can. Sometimes I sit if I plan to meditate for a shorter amount of time.

3. Start by connecting with your body first. Notice if your heart is beating fast or slow.

Take a few slow, deep breaths, breathing into your belly. Really savor those breaths, but remember the goal is more to observe than it is to control. The idea here is to come home to yourself in your body.

Feel your body connecting with the chair, floor, earth, or bed. If you like, you can lay a hand on your heart or belly (or both!) as you breathe.

I find it helpful to focus on a specific part of my body first (like a foot or arm) to really "get into" my body.

4. Once you are feeling some connection and peace with your body, start watching your mind.

Thoughts will come and go. Do not get caught up in them. Watch them as they play across your head.

Eventually, your mind will quiet down as you stay focused on your body.

5. When you are feeling relaxed and have some clear head space, invite your loved one in.

You can do this by:

- Asking a question ("Where are you? Are you okay? What do you want me to know?")
- Acknowledging their presence ("I know you are with me. Please let me know you're here.")
- Bringing to mind a memory that helps you feel connected to them: the way their fur felt, the way they smelled, the way they looked, something you always did together.
- Touching an object of theirs that you brought with you to the meeting.
- Asking them to make you aware of their presence through a request ("If you are with me now, please make my left hand tingle.")
You can also use this practice for asking yes/no questions. ("If the answer is yes, give me a tickling sensation on my right foot.")

After you invite them into your session, continue to meditate. That is, stay focused on your body and do not become attached to thoughts. Simply observe your experience of being.

You may get messages in the form of words or images from your loved one. It's important not to get attached to any outcome, so do not expect to have a certain kind of experience.

The goal is to remain open to any communication or presence your loved one may bring to the session.

The first time I tried to connect with Ansel after he transitioned, I had an amazing experience where he showed me his death (I was not there when Ansel died). He walked me through his last moments, and I felt an incredible sense of peace and ease as he transitioned to the other side.

He also showed me (in images) that he was with me and my husband when we picked him up from the hospital and as we mourned him.

However, I have had plenty of meditation sessions where Ansel did not come through at all, or not in a way I could perceive him.

I say this to let you know not to have expectations and, most importantly, to know that if you do not sense your loved one or do not get messages from them, it is not because they do not love you or want to be with you. And it doesn't mean you should stop trying to connect.

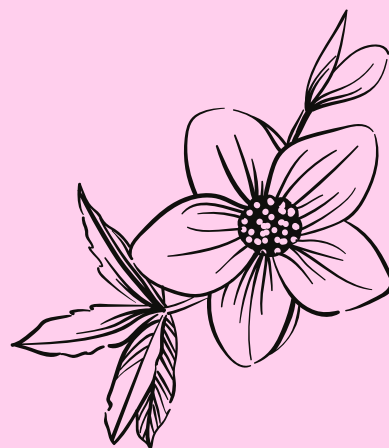
There are so many things we can't understand about their journeys on the other side.

I recommend meditating for a minimum of 20 minutes (I find myself distracted and anxious if I'm rushed, which takes away from the quality of the meeting).

If you can, set aside a half hour to be present and open to a more profound connection with your loved one.

Even if your loved one does not "come through," or even if you feel too drained from grief to actively seek a connection, it will be time well spent: you will feel calmer, lighter, more at ease, and you will have spent time remembering and honoring your loved one.

If I could only recommend one practice from this list, it would be this one. It is the most important and can yield the most profound results.



2. Ask Questions & Make Requests.

I mentioned in the section above to invite your loved one in by asking questions. You can take this a step further by asking questions and even making requests of your loved one when you are not in meditation.

So what exactly should you ask your loved one?

When Ansel passed away unexpectedly, I was extremely distraught and needed to know that he was ok. So I said, "I need to know you're safe. Send me a sign letting me know you're ok."

I got a very clear message immediately after I asked this question.

He told me to go read a poem I had written two months before. I had written this poem but never read it. I was very busy in the months before Ansel passed and had no time to read the poem and type it up on my computer (it was in a notebook).

I did not remember the name of the poem or what it was about.

But when I flipped through my notebook and landed on the page of the poem, the title of the poem was "Safe".

The entire poem was an insanely magical message from Ansel, even though I had written it two months before he died. It has been my prayer since his transition.

So ask your loved one if they are safe.

Ask them what they want you to know.

Ask them to help you understand.

Ask them to give you a sign.

Ask them to be with you.

You can ask them anything. You can even be specific about the sign you'd like to receive.

However, it's important to keep in mind that your loved one will not communicate the same now that they are in their spirit form.

Some spirits will: They will appear or speak to you like they did in life.

But it seems that most commonly, spirits communicate in ways that seem strange to us.

I've had plenty of times when I've asked Ansel for a sign but didn't get one—at least not right away.

So ask your questions and make your requests, but be open to whatever feelings, sensations, signs, or messages you receive in return.

They may not be what you expect. They may not come when you want them to. But they will be significant all the same.



3. Make an Altar or Memory Box.

One of the things I have found most comforting in grief is to have pictures of my departed loved ones or items of theirs around the house.

After Ansel passed, it was incredibly difficult to not "see" him at the house. I immediately created a makeshift altar on our kitchen island of photos of him so I could see and talk to him.

When I was able, I bought picture frames and had professional photos printed of him to complete the altar, and arranged them with beeswax candles, crystals, and items we had collected that reminded me of him.

"Seeing" Ansel every day in my favorite pictures of him helped me immensely. They reminded me of the love we share and that he is still here, in a different way than before, but still here all the same.

I lit the beeswax candles every night and thanked Ansel for being my teacher, my son, my angel.

Another practice I loved doing was making a memory box for Ansel.

I bought an inexpensive decorative box at Home Goods (Ansel's has a unicorn on it, as he reminded me of a unicorn) and filled it with things Ansel loved.

These included toys, the kaftan I was wearing when I last saw Ansel alive (and when we picked him up from the hospital), sheets he had chewed (Ansel loved to rip sheets up), a jar of his fur, a jar of his poop (yes, I saved his adorable poops!) and photos of him.

I also included a stack of index cards on which my husband and I had written as many of our favorite Ansel memories as we could remember.

On what would have been Ansel's 3rd birthday, we took the box and went through all his things and read all the memory cards.

Making this box was so hard, because I had to acknowledge that Ansel had transitioned to do it.

But I also love taking it out during meditation sessions, for special occasions such as his birthday, and when I am having a really hard day grieving to feel close to him, especially touching his fur. When I touch his fur, I feel magic in the air, just knowing Ansel really does exist and that I did not imagine my time with him.

Although they're a poor substitute for our loved one's physical presence, creating these sacred spaces gives us an opportunity to honor their time with us in their physical bodies and their continued relationship with us in their spirit form.

Your altar or memory box for your loved one can be whatever you want it to be.

I find photos to be the most beneficial and meaningful to me, but you may find objects, toys, bedding, clothing, and anything else that reminds you of your loved one to put there.

Take care of the altar and remember your loved one while doing so. They are still with you.



4. Create Micro-Rituals.

I've heard of people advising their loved ones to "forget" about the loss and "move on" with their lives. They may encourage people to put away photos, stop talking about their loved ones, and basically act like nothing happened.

This is extremely toxic and damaging advice that, although it may come from a well-intentioned person, is not healthy for our grief journeys.

Doing the opposite of this—putting up photos, talking about your loved one, and remembering them daily—is what healthy grief looks like.

So how can you do this?

I've found that creating micro-rituals is an easy and meaningful way to begin integrating a loss into my life.

Micro-rituals are like bigger rituals (think celebrating a loved one's birthday, transition day, adoption day, or another special occasion) but they happen daily and only take a few seconds or minutes.

These are ways of staying connected to our loved ones on a daily basis even though they aren't here in their bodies.

Micro-rituals can include:

- Putting photos around the house and talking to your loved one (I have photos of Ansel on my nightstand, fridge, kitchen counters, and walls, and I always say good morning and goodnight to him and talk to him at times throughout the day).

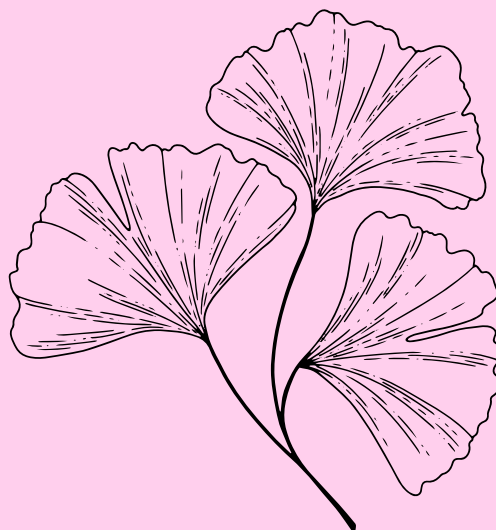
- Having your loved one's things in their usual spot where you can "see" your loved one using them and talk to them. I have Ansel's hay box, water bowl, and bed set up in an area none of my other animals can access so I can visualize him there and talk to him every day.
- Lighting candles on your altar every evening or when you have a meditation session with your loved one.
- Throughout your day, when you feel your heart aching from grief or your stomach drop when you realize for the millionth time that your loved one has left their body, stop, take a deep breath, and tell your loved one things like, "I'm right here," "I love you," "Please help me understand," "Thank you for loving me."

Micro-rituals can be anything you want, anything that helps you feel connected to your loved one.

One of my therapists (who I stopped working with after Ansel passed) told me, "If I walk into someone's house and it looks like a mausoleum for the being who died, I don't think that's healthy."

But if that's what helps you in your grief journey, especially at first, I say do it.

No one else can truly say what will be helpful or beneficial for you. Only you know this.



5. When You Look for Them, Don't Use Your Eyes.

Your loved one is no longer here in their physical form. So when you look for them, you cannot use your eyes.

Yes, it's certainly true that departed loved ones do appear to people they've left behind in a visual form, maybe even in the visual form of their physical body during this lifetime.

But for many of us, that won't be the case.

Instead, we are left to look for them in ways that require us not to rely on our physical sight but rather our spiritual sight.

So how can you look for them if you don't use your eyes?

I myself was confused by this concept at first, especially when my grief coach first posed it. We were talking about Ansel, and she said, "He's saying, 'When you look for me, don't use your eyes.'"

I've thought about that phrase a lot since that day. What did she mean? How could I look for Ansel without physically looking for him?

So I started looking for him in places I didn't before.

"We are a society that demands proof for most things, but some things simply cannot be proved," writes Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.

"For example, if a friend asked you to touch your nose, you could do that and you would both agree that it was done. But if you were asked to touch the love you feel for your child or your parent, what would you touch?"

When I touch my love for Ansel, I feel quite clearly his presence, the way I felt when I was with him.

And though I can no longer hug him or pet him or whisper in his ear, I can feel his love.

So start "looking" in places you never used to look before.

Remember, your relationship with them is different now, so the way you connect with them will be different too.

I started experiencing Ansel not as a white rabbit who stole my heart but as the immense love blooming in my chest, in the pure joy I felt remembering his face, in the bottomless despair I felt when I cradled his body in the car that day, and yes, even in the pain that came with my tears.

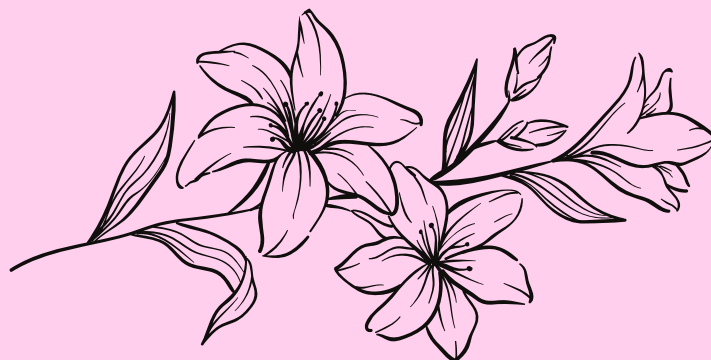
In all of these things, he was there.

When we rely exclusively on our vision, there is so much that we miss.

So next time you're missing your loved one, close your eyes and feel them.

You might be surprised at how often they show up in your life this way.

They are, after all, still here with you.



Thank you!

Thank you for reading this guide. I hope you found it helpful.

Please let me know your thoughts or share feedback by emailing me at:
jennsahar@sagerabbitgrief.com

I am always available to speak with you for a free coaching session.

Sending tender thoughts, immense love, and soft comfort to you as you grieve.

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