

Ambiguous Loss Rituals

Rituals give us tangible responses to intangible losses. When determining what ritual to engage, remember that the power of the ritual lies in the symbolism. Rituals create concrete time and space for grief which helps make it more palpable.

Create a “loss box” or visual memorial around the loss.

Gather items that are meaningful and symbolize something sacred about the loss. You can place them in a box or display them on a table. This is a great activity to do with a group experiencing collective grief.

Take a bath.

Soak in the bathtub and be naked with your grief. Cry as needed and let the tears join the bathwater. When preparing to drain the tub, remain in the tub and experience the water, your tears, and your grief flowing down the drain together.¹

Create a new tradition.

If you are grieving the loss of changing traditions, make sure to intentionally create a new tradition to incorporate into your life where you lost something meaningful.

Hit your “Refresh Button.”

This grief activity is great to use with kids. The child picks a “refresh button” and uses that button when he/she feels stuck in his/her feelings to hold the tension between sadness and looking forward.²

Light a candle at a certain time of day while naming your loss.

The intentional repetitive act of reminding yourself there is light in the darkness can help you focus on the tension of the both/and idea – two opposing feelings can exist at the same time.

Create virtual meetups via Zoom, FaceTime, or Google Hangouts.

Share your feelings of grief with others on a weekly or milestone call. You can even make it a regularly scheduled call and pick a different thing to grieve each week. Connecting with others experiencing ambiguous loss can be especially healing.

Burn your statements of grief and watch the smoke rise.

Write down all the things that are making you sad right now. Rip them up and toss them in the firepit or fireplace. Watch them burn as you envision letting them go.

Blow away your sadness.

Blow your sadness, grief, or anger into a rock, and then throw the rock into a body of water.

¹ <http://www.lunalunamagazine.com/dark/rituals-for-encountering-grief-the-dead>

² <https://www.socialworker.com/feature-articles/practice/no-not-ok-mom-but-will-be-once-i-hit-my-refresh-button/>