

About Holidays: The WhoWeLost Project

"Look," you can proudly say, "Look what I wrote about who I lost."

Whether or not you intend to celebrate during the upcoming Thanksgiving and holiday season, it's clear this time of year is going to be different and difficult.

One thing that can help is writing about your lost loved one. Writing provides a safe space for your memories and feelings. It's healing and offers a sense of empowerment within your grief: YOU are in control of the narrative because no one can take the stories from you. You will feel a sense of accomplishment when you've written, whether alone or in a group, and also pride that you've honored those who are no longer here.

Below are some writing ideas that we think might help. Once you've written a story, please send it to us, using the "Write Their Story" submission form. We'll publish it for you so the story will be there whenever you want to read or share it with someone else.

If you're writing alone

No one can prescribe the correct way to go about this. You might want to write everything down in one burst and then revise later. Or, perhaps a slower approach would work: write just a few sentences a day, then set it aside, returning to add a bit whenever an idea occurs to you. You could write first thing in the morning, late at night before bed, or make notes on the train or bus while you're en route to work.

If you're writing as a group

Group stories are an excellent way to connect with those around you, even if it's on Zoom. The act of writing anchors the gathering. Ask everyone present to contribute 2-3 sentences. Appoint a "scribe" who will assemble the responses, read the story aloud, then keep and/or submit the story.

Starter Ideas

What I miss most about (name of deceased) is:

Their favorite recipe was _____. What were the ingredients? When would they cook it? What meaning does it hold within your family traditions?

If the lost loved one were at the table, what would you want to tell them?

What is a favorite holiday tradition that you shared with who you lost?

What are stories you recall they told you about their childhood?

What was their favorite place? Describe it in detail.

What is an object from their life that has significance? Describe its importance.

Examples: a piece of jewelry, a memento from work like a hardhat, sports memorabilia, a musical instrument, a photograph, ticket stub.

Every family has its own legends and repeated tales. What is a story your lost loved one often told or quoted?

Their favorite things: list as much as you can. Food, movies, songs, books, friends, travels, season, teams, time of day, activities, clubs.