

# What You Need To Know When Someone You Love Dies

My husband died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 56. My world dramatically changed forever. As I look back over the first year, I see myself dealing with his death on four levels.

First, of course, was the grief. Dealing with the sorrow and loss was overwhelming at times. I had my families (mine and his), close friends, my church family, neighbors offering condolences and help, and my faith in God to see me through this difficult time. Whatever you imagine the loss of a spouse to be like, is nowhere near the reality. You have to experience it to really understand it. Plus, each person's experience is unique to their circumstances. I was blessed to have people surround me who cared and wanted to help. I just had to ask.

I was working full time and the mother of two children, ages 14 and 19. Besides these "jobs" I was also dealing with the paperwork that comes with death, which is the next layer. It seemed to go on forever and was squeezed in between my other responsibilities. I can't count the number of appointments I had with our insurance agent, as we changed beneficiaries and made other changes. I also saw our lawyer to revise our will. The list continued as the name on the papers went from Ann & Pete to Ann. Each change brought tears and the continued reality that Pete wasn't coming back.

The third reality layer is all the firsts without your loved one. Pete died Oct. 16, 2010. We always carved pumpkins for Halloween, but that did not happen. We were supposed to have his family over for Thanksgiving, but that also changed. I was only able to stay for a couple hours at his sister's house before I had to leave because being there without Pete was unbearable. We got our Christmas tree much later than usual and managed through a quiet holiday. You soon realize there is a holiday every month plus birthdays and of course the wedding anniversary. Again, we were blessed to have people call, visit, send cards, and pray for us. This all helped.

The last layer is dealing with the practical everyday things that go wrong. The garage door didn't work, the garbage disposal stopped working, the door handle wouldn't turn and the list goes on. I had to ask for help and learn how to do many things.

How did I get through this? Prayer, family, friends, and reading materials on grief helped me. I also saw a grief counselor, joined a grief group, allowed myself to take an anti-depressant, and lived in the present moment. Going back doesn't help unless you are reliving pleasant memories. Worrying about the future isn't helpful either. God will see you through any difficulty, if you let Him.

~Ann