

## Rituals Can Help

Throughout time, symbols and rituals have been used to help us through major changes in our lives. Rituals provide direction to guide us through difficult or confusing periods. For example, when facing our first holiday season after a major loss, rituals can be an enormous help. Doing something symbolic helps to communicate that for which we have no words.

Anyone who has had a loss may design a ritual to help express some aspect of their mourning. The use of ritual can be very healing. Rituals provide parameters for a person's grief. Especially at times when grief is overwhelming, rituals allow for activity with a distinct purpose and a marked beginning and end. It can help feelings become more manageable, especially around holiday times and other difficult days. Meaningful rituals become a channel for an individual's many thoughts and feelings that may not otherwise find expression. Rituals can also assist a griever in maintaining a healthy connection to the deceased.

## Types of Rituals

Kenneth J. Doka, has developed four types of rituals based upon the work of Gennap, Von der Hart, and Rando:

<b><u>Types of Ritual</u></b>	<b><u>Purpose</u></b>	<b><u>Example</u></b>
Rituals of Continuity	To acknowledge a continuing connection between self or family and the deceased	A toast at Thanksgiving to remember and include your loved one
Rituals of Transition	To mark a reclaiming or a movement forward by the bereaved person	Redecorate a room to better suit the person or family you are now
Rituals of Reconciliation	To ask for, or grant, forgiveness To finish unfinished business	Write a letter to the deceased, then ceremonially burn it
Rituals of Affirmation	To say "thank you" to the deceased for their influence in your life, or for something they taught you	Take a hike in the woods, and "say thanks" to Dad for instilling in you your love of nature

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