

## Loss, Letting Go, and Discovering Unexpected Gifts

### PART I Loss

One of the most difficult — and life-changing — emotions humans experience is grief. If you've ever lost a family member, pet, or moved away from a close friend, the grief can remain in your memory for years afterward.

What kinds of loss have left you feeling grief?

**Death:** family member   friend   pet   someone at school   someone you heard about in the news

**Distance:** Moved to a new place   changed schools   divorce/separation

**Endings/Change:** Graduation   end of a relationship   end of sports season/performance/group activity

Consider your personal experiences and create a poem, short story, drawing, first-person essay, song, or short script about what happened.

### PART II Letting Go

Experiencing grief after a loss is uncomfortable and can even make us feel sick. We want to move away from the emotion as quickly as possible, but sometimes uncomfortable feelings weigh us down, and make us feel too tired. One way to let go of pain is to forgive it. This may seem difficult, or even impossible. If you've ever heard the advice: "Fake it til you make it," you know that behaving "as if" creates an actual positive shift in your brain. When you smile, your brain believes you're happy, and releases happiness hormones, like endorphins and serotonin. Forgiveness works similarly. It doesn't mean you're ready to forgive. It just gives you an opportunity to make a list of everything that needs to be let go. Find every upsetting detail in your grief and forgive it. Write as many lines as possible, beginning with at least 10, and working up to 20 (or more).

#### List Poem: I Forgive You

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_

### **PART III      Discovering Unexpected Gifts**

There are many metaphors about going through grief. Some say “Every cloud has a silver lining;” others believe there are gifts in adversity, and still others purport that, “Everything happens for a reason.” These sayings hold truth. Every experience in life teaches us something we wouldn’t have known otherwise, or instills new strength, new understanding, or greater compassion. Look at your loss closely. What unexpected gift can you uncover? How have you grown, learned, become stronger — or gentler? How are you different now because of what happened? Who do you want to become? Create a poem, short story, drawing, first-person essay, song, or short script about what happened.