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SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Guided Imagery When There's Unfinished Business

By Barbara Rubel

Do you have unfinished business with someone who has died? A guided imagery is a way to use your imagination to explore unfinished business. It can help you cope with the hurt you may feel because you did not say something that you needed to say before your loved one's death. Further, it can help you to manage the distress you may feel over not hearing your loved one say something you needed to hear before he or she died. Also, it can help with your question of "why" as you create a healing image of finding a note that reveals all the answers you seek.

The pace of a guided imagery is slow, which allows you time to focus on the experience. Read it to yourself. Pause often to experience the relaxing nature of the script, or ask someone to recite it to you, or tape yourself or someone else reading the script and then listen to the recording. Here is the script:

Picture yourself taking a walk in a tranquil place. Imagine a long inviting path. Approach and become aware of your surroundings. Listen to the soothing sounds. Become curious as you visualize this place. As you walk along the path, your feet feel light beneath you. Pay attention to your legs. Focus on them as you sit in your chair, imagining your legs lighter than air, lifting you into each step. As you look ahead, you notice a person sitting on a large rock. Sit alongside this person and say what you need to say.

It is time to move on. Focus on how you are feeling as you say goodbye. Feel yourself grounded. As you continue on, notice someone sitting on a long wooden bench. As you approach, you recognize this person. Be mindful of what you are feeling as your eyes meet and you sit down. This person needs to tell you something. Listen to their words and what you need to hear. Before you move on, reflect on their lasting words. Say goodbye when you are ready.

Continue along the path. Be mindful of what you see, hear and smell. Allow this place to nourish you. Imagine a small chest in front of you. Open the chest. There is a written letter inside personally addressed to you. Read the note.

Now, place the note inside the chest or do with it as you wish. Place your hands over your heart. Take a healing breath.

When "would've", "should've", and "could've" get in the way of managing your grief, a guided imagery script can allow you to imagine yourself saying, hearing, and reading the words that bring you solace. You may never find the answers you seek. Often times, those answers die with the person you loved. What you can hope for is that in some small way, a guided imagery will allow you to reflect on your narrative in a positive way and find meaning in it.

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