



“Ultimately, meaning comes through finding a way to sustain your love for the person after their death while you’re moving forward with your life. Although your relationship with your loved one will change after death, it will also continue, no matter what. The challenge will be to make it a meaningful one.”

David Kessler

Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief -David Kessler

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In her article about Kessler’s book Drake writes, David Kessler is a bereavement expert who discusses finding meaning after the death of a loved one as the “sixth stage of grief.” The highlights below summarize meanings around the definition of “meaning”.

- Meaning is relative and personal, only you can find your own meaning.
- Meaning takes time. You may not find it until months or even years after a loss.
- It’s not necessary to understand why someone died in order to find meaning.
- The “why” you must answer is not why your loved one died, but why you lived.
- *Why are you here? What meaning can you bring to the rest of your life? What meaning can you find in those who are living?*
- Even when you do find meaning, you will not feel it was worth the cost of losing your loved one.
- When we can find meaning, we are able to move forward in our grief and not become stuck.

In his book, Kessler gives examples of what meaning can look like after the death of a loved one. It may be helpful to review these as you think of what meaning may look like for you after your loss. Meaning is personal, so you may think of other ideas that will be meaningful for you.

- Find gratitude for the time we had with your loved one
- Find gratitude for the support others are giving you
- Realize the value of life – life doesn’t usually last as long as we want
- Create a change in your life in honor of your loved one, transformation can bring meaning.
- Honor and show love for those still in your life, make the most of these relationships.
- Do something that honors them, treating others as they did, or being more present for others who are grieving.
- Find ways to commemorate their life (small or big).

- Create a foundation, movement, or project in their honor.

Kessler suggests using these questions as a reference to help you consider meaning after your loss. I recommend you take the time you need to consider each of these questions. You may find writing answers in a journal helpful, so you can review your thoughts as you explore the concept of meaning in your loved one's life and loss.

Kessler asks us to consider the following questions:

- What have you learned from loss?
- What have you learned to value? What did you value before their death?
- What did they value?
- What was important to you when they lived?-
- What is important to you now?
- What was important to them when they lived?
- What do I feel like I need more of?
- What if our loved ones see through our eyes? What do you want to show them?
- What can you do to keep this from happening to others?
- How have you changed?
- How has their life changed you?
- How did their love change you?
- What do you wish you knew before?
- How can knowing it now bring meaning to you or to others?
- What could you do with the information that was left behind in this loss to help other people?
- How could what I've learned help others?
- What would you like to tell others?
- What would you like to tell others before the tragedy happens?
- What do you know about life that you didn't know before?
- How can we be inspired by their life?
- How can you help people in the same situation?
- What could you do to bring joy to other people's lives?
- How can you bring joy to your own life?