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Chapters

Turning the Pages through Grief



Memories

**THE GOOD, THE BAD,
THE MUNDANE**

Courtesy
What's Your Grief
whatsyourgrief.com

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Written by
Eleanor Haley

What are your memories of your loved one like? I suppose that's a personal question. You don't have to answer it unless you want to. I'm just wondering if other people are like me, in that many of my most frequently accessed and salient memories are ones that seem totally random and inconsequential.

We often have the best recollection for moments associated with high emotion—both good and bad (though these memories are slightly more inaccurate than we tend to believe). This is a well-researched phenomenon and I don't dispute its truth. As people who are grieving, I know we all grapple with at least a few emotional memories in our darkest times.

However, I'm not interested in your memories of the high-highs or the low-lows. What I'm interested in are the small and nostalgic flashes of memory

that involve the oddest things, like the time you went to Blockbuster to rent *The Bodyguard* except when you got there all the copies were out, but then you got lucky and found one in the return bin. Just me?

I've been thinking about this these moments since visiting my hometown last December. Sitting in rooms where my mother's memory still lingers, driving down familiar streets and noticing everything that's changed and everything that's stayed the same, I felt flooded with memory. Not a single one of these memories was terribly significant or special, but put them all together you have a random day-in-the-life. Or a random day in my mother's life, I suppose. I don't know why, but the sum of all these random parts felt excruciatingly sad.

Ever since then, I've felt haunted by arbitrary

continued...

**OCTOBER
2026**



"Memory is the diary that we all carry about with us."
—Oscar Wilde



...continued

memories. Like the time my mother rolled a stop sign on our way to piano because an empty soda bottle got jammed under her break. Or when she took me spring clothes shopping at the Limited Too and bought me matchy-matchy outfits with stirrup leggings. I can't even remember what I did last weekend, so why do I remember these things and why do they pop up out of nowhere?

I wondered if my siblings had similar issues with nostalgia, so I asked them. My younger sister recalled a few times when she caught my mother watching *Fear Factor*. She suspects my mother was too embarrassed to admit she liked it so instead she'd say "Oh this just came on after *Everybody Loves Raymond*!" She also remembered my mother's food order at every restaurant in town.

My older sister remembered laying in bed listening to the sound of my mother putting dishes away and how she used to always pack pool towels and snacks in laundry baskets. Like seemingly everything since she died, these memories, for me at least, are both comforting and also heartbreaking.

I am a parent and, like many parents, I spend a lot of time fussing over making happy memories for my daughters. Must take the kids on vacation, must make sure they have the right amount of gifts on their birthday, must celebrate all the milestones in proper fashion—but I'm beginning to think these efforts are a little misguided. I'm sure they'll

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remember some of these moments, but will they matter nearly as much as all the moments in-between?

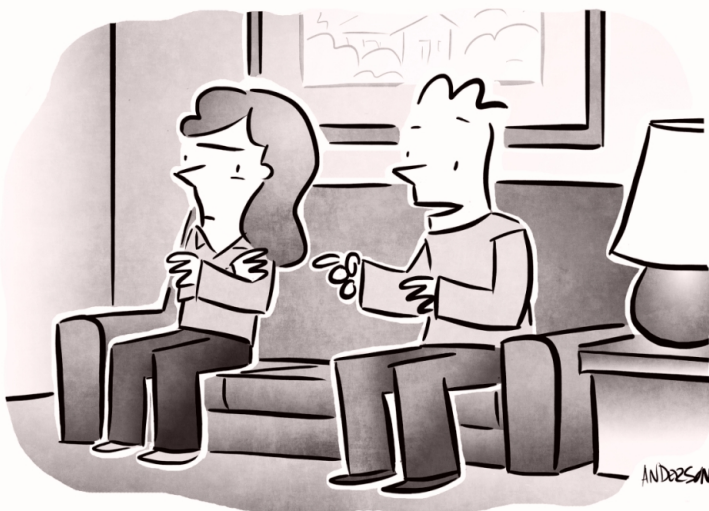
Every once in a while I will be struck by a moment, usually a small and insignificant moment, and I'll just know this is something my daughters will remember. They'll remember being displaced from their usual spaces every Saturday so I could clean

the house. They'll remember staying at the community pool way after dark. They'll remember the night mom and dad let them stay up past their bedtime to watch a movie. In these moments I feel happy and fortunate that we get to experience moments like these, but I also feel heartsick knowing that someday they may miss these moments so much it hurts.

I sometimes wonder how the world would seem had my mother not died. Would I still look at life as something that's constantly slipping through my fingertips? Would I be just as haunted by my memories of the past if my mother were here in the present? There's no way to know and, as gloomy as my outlook may seem to some, I feel incredibly grateful to have the memories regardless of what they bring with them. So, on that note, I'll return to my original question.

What are your everyday memories of your loved one like? The ones so dear they make you feel as though your heart is overflowing with emotion.

Chapters encourages you to visit whatsyourgrief.com for essays and resources.



“Someday we’re going to look back on false memories of this and laugh!”

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feelingsand.co/podcasts/terrible-thanks-for-asking/

Grief Is My Superpower:

Focuses on living a fulfilled life after loss, great for parents.
podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/grief-is-my-superpower-by-mark-lemon/id1468897791

Open to Hope:

Features experts, survivors, and thought leaders sharing insights on finding hope after loss.
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