

T H E
CONSTELLATION
RECOVERY
METHOD

**HOW TO RECOVER THE COMPLETE
PERSON YOU LOST TO GRIEF AMNESIA**

T H E S T A R S F R A M E W O R K

THE CONSTELLATION RECOVERY METHOD

How to Recover the Complete Person You Lost — Not Just the Grief-Edited Version

A Guide for the Complete Witness

[Companion Guide to The Constellation Recovery Method Audio Program](#)

The Constellation Recovery Method

How to Recover the Complete Person You Lost — Not Just the Grief-Edited Version

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[Companion Guide to The Constellation Recovery Method Audio Program](#)

First Edition

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A Note Before We Begin

You are holding this guide because you cannot remember them the way you want to. Not the way they really sounded. Not the ordinary Tuesday afternoon with them. Not the small, habitual, unremarkable things that actually made up the texture of your relationship. What you have instead is a handful of moments on relentless repeat—the final chapters, the hospital room, the call you received—while twenty years of inside jokes, shared meals, lazy mornings, and all those tiny moments that made them specifically them have dissolved into fog.

This is not a failure of love. It is not a failure of memory. It is a neurological phenomenon called Grief Amnesia—a measurable, predictable response to traumatic loss—and it is almost never addressed directly by conventional grief support. Counselling helps you process the pain. Support groups help you survive the absence. But neither gives you back the complete person that grief has obscured. Neither treats the amnesia itself.

The Constellation Recovery Method does. It is built on a single insight that changes everything: the memories are still there. Not deleted. Not gone. Temporarily hidden behind a wall your nervous system erected to protect you from being overwhelmed. The five-step STARS framework—Scan, Trace, Ask, Record, Speak—works with your brain’s actual memory architecture to bring those memories back, not by forcing, not by willing harder, but by systematically activating the neural pathways that grief has left dormant.

The person you love is more recoverable than you think. You’re not going to invent them or idealise them. You’re going to recover them — the real, complete, three-dimensional human being you knew — star by star, until you can see the full constellation again.

The identity you are building through this practice has a name: the Complete Witness. Not someone who has finished grieving, or who has let go, or who has accepted the loss in the way well-meaning people keep suggesting. Someone who holds the whole story.

Someone who refuses to let one terrible moment define an entire existence. Someone who grieves the real person—the complete, complicated, ordinary, beautiful human being they actually were—rather than the grief-edited fragment that trauma left behind.

Use this guide alongside the audio program or on its own. Work through it slowly. Return to it when the fog thickens again. The person you love—their whole constellation—is waiting to be recovered.

Chapter 1

Losing Them Twice

The grief-edited version is not the complete person you lost

You know how sometimes you cannot remember their voice anymore? Not the way it really sounded. Just silence where something precious used to be. If you are experiencing this strange, hollow feeling where you can only remember the worst parts—the hospital room, the final conversations, the funeral, the empty chair—but somehow cannot picture an ordinary Tuesday afternoon with them... if you lie awake trying desperately to recall simple things like how they took their coffee or what they said when they laughed at something on television, and your mind goes blank... then you are experiencing something profound that almost no one talks about directly.

You are losing them twice. Once to death. And now to a strange amnesia that is stealing even your memories.

The Same Few Moments on Repeat

When you try to remember them, you are hit with the same three or four painful memories cycling endlessly. The diagnosis. The accident. The call you received. The last time you saw them. Your brain has locked onto these moments and will not release them, playing them over and over until you are exhausted. Meanwhile, twenty years of inside jokes, shared meals, road trips, lazy Sunday mornings, and all those tiny moments that actually made up your relationship have somehow vanished into fog.

Perhaps you have noticed that you can remember facts about them, but you cannot feel them anymore. You know they loved gardening, but you cannot picture their hands in the soil. You know they had a distinctive laugh, but you cannot hear it. It is like trying to grab smoke. And this may be the most disturbing part: you are starting to worry that you are losing them a second time—not to death, but to this emptiness that is erasing even what you had.

You may be experiencing Grief Amnesia if:

- You can remember the final weeks or days in vivid detail but cannot recall an ordinary Tuesday afternoon
- You know facts about them but cannot feel the sensory reality of who they were
- The same three or four painful memories cycle on repeat
- You experience sudden panic when you cannot remember something that should be unforgettable — which side of the bed they slept on, what their handwriting looked like, how they smelled coming in from outside
- Looking at photographs makes you feel more distant, not closer
- You keep telling the same few stories because they are the only ones you can reach
- Others remember things about your person that you have completely forgotten, which makes you feel like the one person who should remember everything remembers the least
- Forcing yourself to remember makes the fog thicker, not thinner
- Weeks or months have passed and the memories are becoming hazier, not clearer

This is not your fault.

You are not broken.

The memories are still there.

They are temporarily hidden.

This guide will show you how to recover them.

What You Are Actually Grieving

Here is the painful truth that almost no one names: you are not grieving the complete person right now. You are grieving a fragment. A bright, burning, painful fragment that is blocking your view of everything else. It is like trying to look at the moon while someone shines a flashlight directly in your eyes. The moon is still there, full and complete—but all you can see is that blinding light. Until you recover the full constellation of who they were, you cannot grieve them properly. And until you grieve them properly, you cannot find your way through.

Which memories are cycling on repeat for you right now? And what ordinary, unremarkable moments are missing — the things you used to know so well you stopped noticing them?

Chapter 2

Why Nothing Has Worked

Treating the grief without treating the amnesia

You have already tried to find your way through this. You have gone to grief counselling. You have joined support groups. You have read about the stages of grief. You have forced yourself to look through photographs for hours, hoping they will unlock something—but instead you feel more distant, as if you are looking at strangers or at a life that belonged to someone else. You have tried journalling, but the page stays mostly blank or you write the same painful scenes over and over because those are the only ones that surface. You have tried giving it time. But weeks have become months, and instead of the memories becoming clearer, they are becoming hazier. The fog is getting thicker, not thinner.

There are three specific reasons why none of it has provided lasting relief.

Treating Grief Without Treating Amnesia

Most grief support focuses entirely on helping you process the loss itself—the pain, the absence, the hole in your life. It is about learning to accept that they are gone, finding ways to cope with the emptiness, and eventually moving forward. Those things have real value. But they all start from the same flawed premise: that you are working with complete information. That you remember who you lost and now you need to figure out how to live without them.

But that is not what is happening. You do not have complete information. You have a fragment. And trying to heal grief when you only have access to the most painful fraction of the relationship is like trying to stop a flood by mopping the floor while the pipes are still bursting. You are treating the symptom while ignoring the underlying condition. Traditional grief work does not give you back the memories. It helps you survive the loss, but it does not help you recover what grief took from you.

The Cultural Environment That Keeps the Fog Thick

You live in a culture that has completely broken its relationship with death and grief. Three days of bereavement leave. Then back to your desk, expected to function

normally. Everyone asks ‘how are you?’ in that careful tone, but they do not want the real answer. If you say ‘I am falling apart and I cannot remember my mother’s laugh anymore,’ people get uncomfortable. They offer platitudes. So you learn to perform. You learn to say you are fine.

And here is what that performance does to your memory recovery: it completely sabotages it. Remembering requires space, time, and safety. You need to be able to sit with a memory, to let it unfold, to feel the emotions it carries. But when you are constantly performing stability for everyone around you, when you are stuffing your grief into the few private moments you can steal—you never create the conditions that allow memories to surface. Your brain keeps the vault sealed because opening it in public is not safe. The amnesia persists not because the memories are gone, but because you have not been given the environmental permission to access them.

The Suppression Trap

Why forcing yourself to remember makes the amnesia worse:

Memory retrieval is not a matter of willpower.',
You cannot decide ‘I am going to remember more’ and have your brain comply.',

When you try to strong-arm your way through Grief Amnesia,',
you are trying to break into your own mind’s protective vault with a battering ram.',
Your brain responds the way any security system would:',
by strengthening the walls.',

And there is a second layer:',
when you do manage to access a memory, it comes with such intense emotion',
that you terrify yourself.',
You remember something beautiful — the way they laughed at your terrible jokes —',
and the grief hits like a tsunami.',

So your brain learns: memories equal pain.',
The next time it offers you a memory, part of you flinches.',
Your conscious mind reaches for the memories',
while your unconscious mind pushes them away.',
Caught in that tug-of-war, you end up with neither healing nor remembrance.',

Just stuck.',

Time alone does not reverse this.',

In fact, without specific intervention,',

the longer you go without accessing those memories,',

the harder they become to retrieve.',

The neural pathways weaken.',

The details fade.',

Which of these three forces has been most active in keeping the fog thick? Where has the suppression trap been tightest for you?

Chapter 3

Grief Amnesia

The neurological mechanism that hides the constellation

Beneath the inadequate cultural support and the suppression trap, there is something even more specific at work. Something called Grief Amnesia—and understanding it precisely changes everything about how you approach recovery.

Grief Amnesia is not psychological weakness. It is not complicated grief. It is not anything wrong with you. It is a neurological survival response. When you experience the trauma of loss, your brain does not just process it emotionally—it processes it structurally. It literally reorganises how you access memories of that person.

How the Brain Stores Different Memories

Emotional memories and neutral memories are stored differently in your brain. Highly emotional events—trauma, intense joy, devastating loss—are processed through the amygdala, your brain's emotional centre. These memories get priority encoding. They are vivid. They are sticky. They come back whether you want them to or not. This is why you can remember every detail of the moment you found out they died, or the last conversation you had, or how they looked in the hospital.

But the thousands of ordinary moments—Tuesday night dinners, car rides where you did not say much, the way they tied their shoes or loaded the dishwasher or said your name—those memories are processed differently. They are stored as episodic and semantic memory, which is more fragile, more distributed across your brain, and requires more specific cues to retrieve. When grief trauma hits, your brain goes into triage mode. The amygdala becomes hyperactive. The hippocampus, crucial for memory formation and retrieval, becomes less effective under chronic stress. Your brain pumps out cortisol, which further disrupts memory consolidation.

THE GRIEF AMNESIA MECHANISM — what is happening neurologically:

Traumatic memories: processed through the amygdala, priority encoded,'

vivid and intrusive, return whether you want them to or not.'

Ordinary memories: stored as episodic and semantic memory,'
fragile, distributed, requiring specific retrieval cues.'

What grief trauma does:',

Amygdala becomes hyperactive — fixating on threat and loss.',

Hippocampus becomes less effective under chronic stress.',

Cortisol floods the system, further disrupting memory consolidation.'

Result: traumatic memories stay accessible — even intrusive.',

Ordinary memories become harder and harder to reach.'

The result is like having a massive library where someone rearranged all the books,'
removed the card catalogue, and turned off most of the lights.'

The books exist. The information is there.'

But you stumble around in the dark,'

bumping into the same few volumes over and over',

while thousands of others sit unreachable on distant shelves.'

And it is self-reinforcing:',

Every time you rehearse the death, the loss, the painful final chapter,'

you strengthen those neural pathways',

and make the others harder to access.'

You are training your own mind to associate your loved one primarily with pain.'

Why the Memories Are Not Gone

Here is the crucial truth: the memories are not deleted. They are obscured. The pathways to them are blocked by trauma, not erased by time. Your person—the complete, whole, three-dimensional human being you loved—is waiting to be recovered. Not invented. Not idealised. Recovered. Brought back from where grief has hidden them. And the way to do that is not by forcing or willing harder, but by working with your brain's actual memory systems to clear the fog and reactivate the dormant pathways. That is exactly what the Constellation Recovery Method provides.

What you remember right now is a fraction of what was real. The complete person — their ordinary beauty, their specific quirks, their particular way of moving through the world — is still there. Just hidden. And hidden is recoverable.

What specific ordinary detail about your person have you been most distressed to find you cannot recall? What does its absence tell you about which neural pathway has been most disrupted?

Chapter 4

The Constellation Recovery Method

Recovery, not acceptance — remembering, not letting go

The Constellation Recovery Method begins with a reframe that is different from anything conventional grief support offers. Most grief work starts with acceptance—learning to accept that they are gone, finding ways to live with the absence. The Constellation Recovery Method does not start there. It starts with recovery. Not letting go. Remembering. Not moving past the relationship. Seeing it clearly, perhaps for the first time since the loss happened.

When someone you love dies, your brain performs an emergency edit. It is trying to protect you, trying to help you survive the unsurvivable. But in doing so, it strips away dimension, context, and complexity. It reduces a thousand-star constellation down to the few brightest points—the trauma, the final moments, the loss itself—and locks your attention there, like you are stuck staring at the sun. This method is about unlocking that attention. About deliberately, systematically recovering what your protective brain set aside. About rebuilding the constellation star by star until you can see the full pattern again.

What Makes This Different

Most grief approaches treat your grief as if you are working with complete information—as if you remember who you lost and now need to figure out how to live without them. But you do not have complete information. You have a fragment. And treating grief when you only have access to the most painful fraction of the relationship is like trying to mourn a book when you have only been allowed to read the last page.

The Constellation Recovery Method gives you the whole book back. Not by manufacturing false comfort or toxic positivity. By recovering what is actually yours—the real, complete relationship you had with a real, complete human being. Not the truncated, trauma-soaked version that Grief Amnesia has left you with. When you can see the full constellation, something shifts. The grief does not disappear—it is still grief,

it is still loss—but it transforms. From sharp and unbearable to bittersweet and real. The grief of gratitude. The grief that says: this was beautiful, and I am sad it is over, and I am grateful I had it.

The STARS Framework

The recovery process follows five steps that spell out STARS. Each step targets a different type of memory network, activating pathways that grief has left dormant. You are not creating new memories or making anything up. You are clearing the fog so you can see what was always there.

S
SCAN

Systematically scan your environment for physical anchors — objects, places, songs, smells — that your loved one interacted with. You are creating a sensory inventory of ordinary moments, coming in through the back door of context-dependent memory that trauma has not blocked.

T
TRACE

Take one mundane routine you shared and trace it in extreme detail, recovering at least ten forgotten micro-details. Routines are stored as procedural memory — one of the most robust systems you have — and can be accessed even when other memory pathways are blocked.

A
ASK

Reach out to people who knew your loved one and specifically ask them to share their unremarkable memories. The stories nobody tells at funerals but that reveal true character. Their mundane memories trigger your own through association — and the constellation grows.

R
RECORD

Take all recovered memories and record them in specific sensory detail, building your complete constellation map. Externalising memories makes them permanent — fixed points that cannot be edited by your threat-focused brain or degraded by repeated access.

S
SPEAK

Take your recovered memories and speak directly to your loved one, acknowledging the full person you have recovered. Not the idealised



version. Not the trauma-edited version. The real person — flaws, quirks, ordinary beauty, specific imperfections, and all.

The chapters that follow walk through each step in full detail—with specific techniques, examples, and exactly what to do when the method feels blocked. Read them in sequence before beginning the full practice.

The Constellation Recovery Method starts with recovery, not acceptance. What does it mean to you that the goal is to remember more completely, not to let go? What shifts in you when you frame your work that way?

Chapter 5

The STARS Framework

How the five steps work together to rebuild the full picture

Before going deep into each step, it helps to understand how the five elements of STARS function as an integrated recovery system—and why each step accesses a different part of your memory architecture.

The Logic of the Sequence

Scan comes first because physical anchors bypass the threat-focused filter that trauma has installed. Your brain stored memories not just as mental files but as associations with physical space and sensory input. By systematically engaging with those physical anchors—the coffee mug, the worn cushion, the specific smell—you are coming in through the back door. You are retrieving memories through context cues that do not trigger the amygdala’s alarm response the way direct emotional effort does.

Trace comes second because routines are stored as procedural memory—one of the most robust memory systems you have, because it is how you learned to walk, talk, and perform complex tasks automatically. This system is different from the episodic memory system that grief trauma most disrupts. By deliberately walking through shared routines in slow motion, you are activating pathways that are largely intact—and recovering the micro-details that lived in those repeated, ordinary sequences.

Ask comes third because memory is partly socially constructed. We remember things better when we talk about them with others. When someone shares their mundane memory of your person—the way they always took the last cookie but left half behind, the specific way they ordered a burger—that detail triggers your own related memories through association. Their ordinary story becomes the retrieval cue for yours. And the act of asking also gives other people permission to remember the real person, not just the eulogy version.

Record comes fourth because memories that exist only in your head are vulnerable. They are subject to reconsolidation—slightly rewritten every time you access them, fading over time, merging with other memories, edited by your current emotional state. Memories that are recorded in specific sensory detail become fixed points. External

memory stores that your threat-focused brain cannot edit or suppress. You are making the constellation visible and permanent.

Speak comes fifth because it completes the reconsolidation process in a therapeutic direction. Every time you access a memory, it briefly becomes unstable and then consolidates again. By deliberately accessing the full, complete memory while speaking directly to your loved one, you reconsolidate it as bittersweet but complete—rather than overwhelming and fragmentary. You are literally rewriting the emotional signature of the memory from unbearable to bearable.

THE STARS SEQUENCE — the memory system each step activates:

SCAN: Context-dependent memory — physical anchors bypass the trauma filter',

↓

TRACE: Procedural memory — routines stored as sequences, largely intact after grief',

↓

ASK: Social memory scaffolding — others' ordinary memories trigger your own',

↓

RECORD: Elaborative encoding — external, permanent, immune to reconsolidation',

↓

SPEAK: Therapeutic reconsolidation — rewriting the memory's emotional signature',

Together, these five steps create a comprehensive intervention',

that works with how memory actually functions rather than against it.',

You are not trying to force yourself to feel differently.',

You are systematically recovering information your brain set aside for protection',

and in doing so, giving yourself access to the real relationship',

the real person, the full constellation.',

The Complete Witness Identity

Woven through all five steps is an identity you are building: the Complete Witness. Not someone who has stopped grieving, or who has let go, or who has found closure.

Someone who refuses to let one terrible moment define an entire existence. Someone who holds the whole story—the ordinary, the complicated, the beautiful, the annoying, the specific—and grieves from that wholeness rather than from the truncated fragment

that trauma left. You do not become the Complete Witness all at once. You become one recovered star at a time.

Which of the five STARS steps do you most need right now? Which feels most immediately accessible? Which feels most blocked? Write about all three.

Chapter 6

Scan

Building a sensory inventory of ordinary moments

Scan is the first step of STARS and the one that gives your recovery a foothold. You are going to systematically scan your environment for physical anchors—objects, places, songs, smells—that your loved one interacted with. You are not looking for the big things, the obvious things. You are looking specifically at the small, ordinary things. The ones that have been sitting there so long you stopped seeing them.

How the Scan Works

Start in one room. Look at everything with fresh eyes. Maybe there is a coffee mug in the cabinet that was their favourite—not because it was special, but because it was the right size and the handle fit their grip comfortably. You probably have not thought about that mug since they died. But when you pick it up now and really look at it, you might suddenly remember the sound it made when they set it down on the counter. The specific clink. The way they always left a little coffee at the bottom because they never liked the last sip when it got cold.

Or you are scanning the living room and you notice the wear pattern on one cushion of the sofa. That was their spot. And suddenly you remember how they always sat slightly sideways, one leg tucked under them, even though they complained it made their foot fall asleep. You remember the specific way they would shake out their leg afterwards, hopping on one foot and laughing at themselves. This is not about the big memories. It is specifically about the small ones. The mundane ones. The ones that felt too ordinary to matter. Because these are the memories that hold the dimensionality of who your person actually was.

SCAN — what to look for and how to work with what you find:

OBJECTS: Their favourite mug, worn spot on the sofa, their bookmark in a book,'
the junk drawer with its specific collection of random things.'
Physically touch what you find. Pick it up. Let it speak.'

MUSIC: Their playlists. The radio station they always had on in the car.',
The genre they played while cooking.',
The embarrassing guilty-pleasure music they listened to when no one was watching.',
Follow the thread wherever it leads.'

SMELLS: Their perfume or cologne. Their shampoo. The specific coffee they drank.',
The smell of their car. The detergent they used.',
Environmental smells: the outdoors they worked in,',
the workplace they carried on their clothes,',
the specific combination of soap and sweat after exercise.',
Smell bypasses your normal memory filters entirely.',
It is the most powerful sensory anchor you have.'

THE KEY QUESTION for every object, song, or smell you find:',
Where were you when they interacted with this?',
What were they doing? What were you doing?',
What else was happening in that moment?',
Follow every thread without forcing. Stay curious, not just sad.'

What the Scan Is Building

You are creating a sensory inventory—and as you go, write down what you find. Object. Sense memory. Any fragments of memory that surface. You are not forcing anything. You are scanning systematically and noting what is there. Some people find that scanning one room takes an afternoon. Some find it takes days. That is exactly right. You are not rushing. You are searching for the doorways back into your person's ordinary life, and every doorway you find is a star re-emerging from the fog.

Name three objects in your home right now that belonged to your person or that they regularly used. For each one, write whatever memory surfaces when you focus on it — without forcing or filtering.

Chapter 7

Trace

Recovering the ten forgotten micro-details inside one shared routine

Trace is the second step of STARS and the one that goes deepest into the ordinary texture of your shared life. You are going to take one mundane routine you shared together and trace it in extreme detail, recovering at least ten forgotten micro-details from those repetitive moments. Not the peak moments—the holidays, the celebrations, the dramatic events. The routine ones. The ones that happened over and over. Because repetitive routines are where the bulk of your real life together actually existed.

Choosing Your Routine

Choose a routine that happened regularly—daily is ideal, but weekly works too. A morning routine: breakfast together before work. A commute if you drove together. An evening routine: making dinner or watching television. A bedtime routine. A weekend routine like grocery shopping or the farmer's market. The key is that it was repetitive. The thousand identical Tuesday mornings or Sunday afternoons are where your relationship actually lived, and that is where the most recoverable memories are waiting.

You are going to mentally walk through the routine step by step, in real time, like watching a film in slow motion. And you are going to recover details you have not thought about since before they died.

What Tracing Looks Like in Practice

Let us say you choose breakfast. Who woke up first? How did you know they were awake—did you hear them, did the bed shift, did they try to be quiet or just get up normally? What did they do first—bathroom, or straight to the kitchen? Did they put on a robe or stay in pajamas or get dressed right away? What was the first thing they said to you each morning? Was it different depending on how they slept? Did they wake up chatty or quiet?

Trace their physical movements through the kitchen. Which cabinet did they go to first? Did they pour coffee for you too, or just themselves? Did they add anything to it—how much, what kind? Did they stir it or let it mix on its own? What did they typically eat?

Where did they sit—at the table, the counter, in front of the television? What did they do while they ate?

TRACE — this is where you start hitting gold:

The tiny, specific things you saw so many times you stopped registering them.',

The way they held their coffee cup with both hands even when it wasn't that cold.',

The specific sound their chair made when they pulled it out.',

The fact that they always left their phone face-down on the table.',

The way they brushed crumbs off their lap even when there weren't really any crumbs.',

The specific facial expression they made when they took the first sip of coffee.',

They burned the toast more often than not.',

They always scraped off the burnt parts over the sink with a specific scraping motion.',

They made a little annoyed sound when they did it.',

They'd joke 'perfect, just how I like it' in a tone that acknowledged they'd screwed it up again.',

That's a recovered memory. That's a star emerging from the fog.',

They had a spot of toothpaste on their shirt probably three times a week.',

You'd point it out. They'd look down, say 'dammit,' and try to wipe it off.',

Which never worked and just made a bigger spot.',

You had a specific back-and-forth about this that was the same every time.',

Another star.',

PUSH YOURSELF TO FIND TEN.',

Your brain will want to summarise. 'They made breakfast' is not a memory.',

It is a summary. You are looking for the actual moments.',

The real, specific, boring details.',

Those are the stars.',

What Tracing Recovers

You are not just remembering what happened. You are remembering who they were in those moments. Their habits, their quirks, their small clumsiness or competencies, their rhythms and patterns, their particular way of moving through ordinary life. Do this with

at least one routine, but ideally several—trace a morning, trace an evening, trace a weekend. The more you do, the more you are rebuilding the everyday reality of who they were, which is the foundation of the actual relationship you had.

Choose one shared routine and begin tracing it now. Write the first five micro-details you can recover — the smaller and more specific the better. What are you beginning to see?

Chapter 8

Ask

Gathering the ordinary memories nobody told at the funeral

Ask is the third step of STARS and the one that expands your constellation beyond what you yourself witnessed. You are going to reach out to other people who knew your loved one and specifically ask them to share their unremarkable memories—the stories nobody tells at funerals but that reveal true character. And you are going to ask a specific question, not the general one that produces eulogy stories.

The Question That Works

Contact friends, coworkers, family members, neighbours—anyone who knew them in any capacity. And ask something like this: ‘I’m trying to remember the whole person, not just the big moments. What’s an ordinary, maybe even boring thing you remember about them? Something that wouldn’t make sense to mention at a funeral but that was just characteristically them?’

Or: ‘What did they do or say that was so typical of them that you’d almost forgotten it until I asked?’ Or, crucially: ‘What annoyed you about them? What quirk or habit drove you a little crazy?’ That last one matters. Real people are annoying sometimes. They have flaws and irritating habits. If the memory of your person contains no annoyances, you are not remembering a complete person. You are remembering a grief-edited saint.

ASK — what other people’s ordinary memories can recover:

A coworker might tell you: ‘They always took the last cookie’,
but would break it in half and leave half behind like that made it okay.’,

A friend might remember: ‘They had a very specific way they liked their burger ordered’,
and would get genuinely upset if the restaurant got it wrong.’,

A family member might recall: ‘They were terrible at wrapping presents.’,
Catastrophically bad. They’d get frustrated every holiday’,

but refused to use gift bags because they felt like that was cheating.”,

These details are gold. Write them all down.',
Even the ones that seem too small to matter.',
Especially the ones that seem too small to matter.',

When you get resistance — when someone starts telling you nice, appropriate stories',
— gently redirect: ‘No, I mean like, what did they always do in meetings?’,
How did they take their coffee? What show were they always trying',
to get people to watch?’”,

Their ordinary memory about how your person took their coffee',
triggers your related memory about the specific mug',
which triggers your memory about the conversation you had over coffee',
which triggers more memories in a cascading recovery.',
The constellation grows.',
The black hole loses its gravitational pull.',

What Asking Also Does

This step does something else important: it helps other people with their own Grief Amnesia. When you give them permission to remember the mundane, the ordinary, even the slightly annoying, you are helping them recover their full constellation too. Grief can be isolating because everyone is trying to be respectful and appropriate. Asking this question breaks that pattern. It lets everyone remember the real person together. Some people find it helpful to do this conversationally, over coffee or a meal. You say ‘I’ve been trying to remember what breakfast was like with them, and I realised I couldn’t remember what they typically ate. Do you know?’ And that one question can spiral into an hour of recovered memories as you both pull on that thread.

Who are three people you could contact to ask for their unremarkable memories? Write the specific question you will ask each of them. Then note: what ordinary detail about your person are you most hoping someone else can help you recover?

Chapter 9

Record

Making the constellation permanent and immune to reconsolidation

Record is the fourth step of STARS and the one that makes your recovery permanent. You are going to take all the memories you have been recovering through Scan, Trace, and Ask, and record them in specific sensory detail—building your complete constellation map in a form that exists outside your head.

Why External Recording Matters

Memories that exist only in your head are vulnerable. They are subject to reconsolidation—slightly rewritten every time you access them. They fade. They merge with other memories. They are edited by your current emotional state. When you are in the depths of grief, every accessed memory gets reconsolidated with the emotional signature of grief. But memories that are recorded in detail become fixed points—something you can return to again and again without degrading them. Proof that the full constellation exists, immune to your brain's ongoing revisions.

How to Record

Be ridiculously specific. Do not write 'they liked coffee.' Write: 'They drank coffee from a specific blue mug that was chipped on the handle, always filled exactly three-quarters full, with exactly one and a half spoons of sugar and a splash of milk—never cream—stirred counterclockwise for some reason, and they always smelled it before the first sip even though it was the same coffee they drank every day.'

Include sensory details: what things looked like, sounded like, smelled like, felt like. Include dialogue if you can remember it—not just what they said, but how they said it, their specific tone, their cadence, the words they always used or never used. Include your own reactions: did you find this habit endearing or annoying? Did you laugh? Did you roll your eyes? Were you paying close attention or was this such a background part of life you barely registered it? Include context: were they healthy or dealing with illness? Stressed or relaxed? Was this during a good period in your relationship or a rocky one?

RECORD — what a fully recorded memory looks like compared to a summary:

SUMMARY (not a memory):',

‘They liked to read.’,

RECORDED MEMORY:',

‘They had a favourite section of the newspaper they always read first — the sports.',

They’d fold it in a specific way, into quarters, even though I always told them',

it was easier to use a tablet.',

They’d lick their thumb before turning pages and I’d tease them about being old-fashioned.',

They’d read with their coffee getting cold beside them',

and not notice until they reached for it and made a face.”,

SUMMARY (not a memory):',

‘We watched TV together.’,

RECORDED MEMORY:',

‘They had an irrational loyalty to one specific terrible reality show.',

They always predicted the endings wrong — one hundred per cent failure rate.',

They’d be so confident about the predictions and so indignant when wrong.',

I pretended to hate the show but got genuinely invested because of their commentary.',

That was us. That was specifically, particularly us.”,

As you record these memories, you will notice something happening.',

The constellation is becoming visible.',

You are not just collecting individual stars',

but seeing how they connect:',

how the morning ritual connects to their sensitivity,',

which connects to their specific kind of grumpiness,',

which connects to how they’d apologise,',

which connects to their particular way of showing love.',

You are recovering a whole person.',

Take one memory you have recovered through Scan or Trace and record it here in full sensory detail — as specifically as possible. Include what it looked like, sounded like, smelled like. Include your own reaction. Include context.

Chapter 10

Speak

Acknowledging the complete person you have recovered

Speak is the fifth and final step of STARS, and it is where grief transforms. You are going to take your recovered memories and speak directly to your loved one—acknowledging the full person you have recovered. Not the idealised version. Not the trauma-edited version. The real person: their flaws, their quirks, their ordinary beauty, their specific imperfections, all of it.

What Speaking Looks Like

This might feel strange if you have never talked to someone who has died, or if you have only expressed pain and longing to them: I miss you, I cannot do this without you, why did you leave? This is different. This is more like talking to them the way you would have when they were alive—with the same mix of love and exasperation and humour and honesty.

You might say something like: ‘I remembered the way you always left your shoes in the middle of the floor exactly where I’d trip over them. Every day. We must have had that argument five hundred times. And you know what? I miss those stupid shoes. I miss being annoyed about them. I miss the specific way you’d say sorry while not moving them even a little bit. I miss that you were imperfect and slightly inconsiderate about shoes and that was just part of who you were.’

SPEAK — what you are saying when you speak to the complete person:

You are not grieving an absence.',
You are grieving a specific, beloved, complicated, real human being',
who you knew deeply and who knew you.',

You might say:',
‘I was thinking about how much you loved those terrible reality shows.',
The ones I pretended to hate but actually kind of got invested in',

because you'd give me running commentary.'
I remembered that you always predicted the endings wrong. Always.'
You had a one hundred per cent failure rate at guessing who would win.'
And you'd be so confident about your predictions and so indignant when wrong.'
That was such a you thing. Being confidently incorrect and somehow making it charming."

You are saying: I see you now.'
Not the fragment. Not the trauma-edited version.'
The whole you.'
And I'm grateful for all of it.'
The good, the annoying, the mundane, the beautiful — all of it.'

This is where grief transforms.'
From the grief that says: I've lost everything',
and I don't even know what it was and the pain is endless and meaningless',
To the grief that says: this was real and it was good and it mattered',
and I'm grateful I had it even though I'm sad it's over.'

That is bittersweet grief.'
That is the grief you can actually carry forward with you into the rest of your life.'

Speaking as Ongoing Practice

The Speak step is not a one-time thing. It is an ongoing practice. As you recover more memories, you speak about them. As the constellation becomes more complete, you acknowledge what you are seeing. Some people do this aloud, at a grave or a meaningful place. Some write letters. Some have internal conversations. The medium does not matter. What matters is that you are relating to the complete person, not the ghost. You might find yourself laughing sometimes—real laughter, not bitter laughter. Your person was funny sometimes. They did ridiculous things. Remembering that, speaking it aloud, laughing about it: that is not disrespectful. That is honouring the real person.

Write the opening of a Speak practice here — something you want to say to the complete person you are recovering. Include something you loved, something that annoyed you, and something you wish you had told them when they were alive.

Chapter 11

Overcoming the Obstacles

The five forces that will try to block the recovery

Even with the STARS framework fully understood, you will face resistance. Here are the five specific obstacles you will encounter, addressed directly.

Obstacle One: The Pain of Real Grief

This work will be painful sometimes—but in a different way from the Grief Amnesia pain. When you start recovering ordinary memories, you will feel the loss acutely. You will think: I will never have breakfast with them again. I will never hear them complain about burning the toast. All those ordinary moments I took for granted are gone. This pain is valid. But notice that you are feeling it about something specific, something real, something complete. You are grieving the loss of breakfast together, not some overwhelming absence you cannot even articulate. That is progress. The pain of real grief is the grief you can actually feel, process, and eventually integrate. Grief Amnesia pain just stays stuck.

Obstacle Two: Other People's Judgement

Some people will think you are dwelling, or not moving on, or that this much detail is unhealthy. They will say you need to let go, that you are living in the past, that this is not what they would have wanted. Those people do not understand Grief Amnesia and they do not understand what you are doing. You are not dwelling. You are recovering. You are not refusing to move on. You are building the foundation that makes moving forward genuinely possible. You do not owe anyone an explanation, but if you want to offer one: 'I'm working through a specific process to recover memories that got blocked by trauma. It's helping.' Then continue regardless of their opinion.

Obstacle Three: Uncomfortable Memories

You might not want to remember some things. You might bump up against memories that are uncomfortable—a difficult morning, a real argument, something they did that genuinely hurt you. You might learn something through the Ask step that you did not

know and are not happy to know. This is where you have to remember: you are recovering a real person, not a perfect person. Real people hurt us sometimes. Real relationships include conflict, tension, and disappointment. If you only recover the good memories, you are still not seeing the full constellation. You are just trading one edited version for a different one. It is all right if some stars in your constellation are complicated. That is what makes it real.

Obstacle Four: When Nothing Comes

OBSTACLE FOUR: The memories won't come when you want them to.

You scan an environment and feel nothing.'
You try to trace a routine and hit a blank spot.'
You ask someone for memories and they say 'I don't really remember anything specific.',

This does not mean you are doing it wrong.'
Memory recovery is not linear.'

A memory that won't surface today will often arrive spontaneously next week',
because you primed your brain by looking for it.'

Keep scanning even when nothing comes.'
Keep tracing even when you hit blank spots.'
Keep asking even when people say they don't remember.'

You are creating the conditions for recovery.'
You are clearing the fog gradually. Not all at once.'

Each attempt — even the ones that feel empty —',
is telling your brain that this territory is safe to enter.'
You are expanding the zone of permission.'
The memories are responding to that expansion.'
They will come.'

Obstacle Five: Guilt About the Ordinary

You might feel guilty for focusing on something as mundane as how they made coffee, as if this trivialises the significance of the loss. This is backwards. The traumatic stuff—the final moments, the loss itself—is not where your relationship lived. That is the ending. The relationship lived in all those ordinary moments you are now recovering. Honouring the ordinary is not diminishing the loss. It is honouring the real relationship. It is saying: what we had was significant enough to remember in detail, not just in broad dramatic strokes. The ordinary moments are where love actually happened. Remembering them is finally seeing what you actually lost—which paradoxically makes it possible to grieve it properly.

Which of the five obstacles feels most pressing for you right now? Write a specific response to it — what you will say to yourself the next time it appears.

Chapter 12

Why This Works

Working with memory's actual architecture, not against it

The Constellation Recovery Method works when other approaches do not because it addresses the actual mechanism of Grief Amnesia. Each step of STARS works with a different neural pathway to break the trauma loop and reactivate dormant memory networks. You are not trying to force yourself to feel differently. You are not positive-thinking your way out of grief. You are systematically recovering information your brain set aside for protection—and in doing so, giving yourself access to the real relationship, the real person, the full constellation.

What Each Step Does Neurologically

When you Scan your environment for physical anchors, you are using context-dependent memory—coming in through the back door, bypassing the threat-focused filter through sensory cues. When you Trace mundane routines, you are activating procedural memory systems, some of the most robust you have, which are stored differently from the episodic memories grief trauma most disrupts. When you Ask others for their memories, you are using social scaffolding—their ordinary stories cascade into your own related memories through association, reactivating pathways you could not have reached alone.

When you Record memories in specific sensory detail, you are engaging elaborative encoding and creating permanent external memory stores that your threat-focused brain cannot edit or suppress. When you Speak to your loved one using these recovered details, you are completing therapeutic reconsolidation—literally rewriting the emotional signature of the memory from unbearable to bittersweet and bearable.

Each step of STARS targets a different memory system. Together they create a comprehensive intervention that works with how memory actually functions. You're not forcing anything. You're not

overriding anything. You're facilitating what your brain has been trying to do all along: process and integrate, so you can finally grieve the real person you lost.

What the Full Constellation Changes

When you can see the full constellation, the pain does not disappear—but it transforms. Because you are not grieving an overwhelming absence anymore. You are grieving a specific, beloved, complicated, real human being who you knew deeply and who knew you. You are grieving all those breakfasts you will not have. All those annoying habits you will not be annoyed by. All those boring Tuesdays you will not share. That grief is sad. It is painful. But it is also beautiful. It is the grief of gratitude. And that grief—bittersweet, specific, complete—is the grief you can carry forward into the rest of your life without it destroying you.

What would it mean for your daily life if the grief shifted from overwhelming absence to bittersweet gratitude? What would become possible that is not possible now?

Chapter 13

Your 30-Day Plan

Building the Complete Witness practice from this moment forward

Understanding the Constellation Recovery Method and actually practising it are two different things. Here is your concrete plan—starting right now, building through today, this week, and the thirty days ahead.

Right Now: The Most Boring Tuesday

While you are still reading these words, think of your person. Not the last time you saw them, not the hospital or the accident or however things ended. Instead, think of the most boring, forgettable Tuesday you ever spent with them. Maybe you were both tired. Maybe you ran errands together, or sat in traffic, or folded laundry while they watched television. Nothing special happened. It was just life. Can you find that memory? It is there. It might take a moment, but it is there. When you find it, just acknowledge it. You do not have to do anything with it yet. Just notice that it exists, that it is real, that it is yours. You have just taken the first step. You have looked away from the black hole and turned toward the constellation.

Today: Your Recovery Journal

In the next few hours, create your Recovery Journal. A notebook, a document on your phone, whatever feels right. Then set a timer for fifteen minutes and write down ten ordinary moments with your person. Not significant moments—not birthdays or holidays or dramatic events. Ordinary ones. The time you both got caught in the rain. When they complained about their boss over breakfast. When you waited together for a late train. The evening you assembled furniture and could not figure out the instructions. When they hummed while making coffee.

Push yourself past the first few that come easily. The magic is in the ones you have to dig for—the ones you have not thought about in years, the ones that seemed too small to matter. Do not write a story about each one. Just capture it. A sentence or two. You are building a list, not writing a memoir. If tears come, let them. If you smile, let yourself smile. You are allowed to feel both.

Tomorrow: The Daily Practice

Every morning, before you check your phone or start your day, spend five minutes on constellation recovery. Choose one dimension to focus on. Maybe tomorrow you explore their essential qualities—the way they organised the silverware drawer, their irrational loyalty to a terrible sports team, how they always took the corner piece of cake, their weird thing about socks, the phrase they used when they were annoyed, that specific gesture they made when they were thinking. Five minutes. One dimension. Every morning. This is how you train your brain to seek the whole constellation instead of collapsing into the black hole.

This Week: Days Two Through Seven

YOUR DAILY CONSTELLATION RECOVERY PRACTICE:

DAY TWO: Ordinary moments.',

Ten more, different from yesterday's list. Push for the ones',
you have not thought about in years.',

DAY THREE: Essential qualities.',

What made them specifically them?',
Their particular habits, quirks, rhythms, and tendencies.',

DAY FOUR: Shared humour.',

What made you both laugh? What inside jokes did you have?',
What could you reference that would make them snort or roll their eyes?',

DAY FIVE: Unguarded moments.',

When were they most fully themselves?',
When did you catch them when they didn't know you were watching?',

DAY SIX: Silent witness memories.',

Times you were just present together without needing to say anything.',
The texture of quiet time with them.',

DAY SEVEN: Return to whichever dimension felt most powerful and go deeper.',

ALSO THIS WEEK: Share one recovered memory.'

Find one person who knew your loved one and tell them one ordinary thing',
you have remembered. Not to seek comfort. Not because you need something',
Because speaking memories aloud brings them more fully back to life.'

ALSO THIS WEEK: Practise redirecting.'

When you feel the traumatic memory pulling at you, say — out loud if possible:',
'That's not the complete story.'",
Then deliberately retrieve one ordinary memory you have recovered.',
You are not denying what happened.',
You are refusing to let it be the only thing that happened.'

Day Thirty

Thirty days from now, you will wake up and realise that when you think of your person, multiple memories arrive instead of just one. The traumatic memory might still be there—healing does not mean forgetting—but it is no longer alone. It is no longer the whole story. You will find yourself smiling at a random moment because you remembered something funny they said. You will feel gratitude and sadness in the same breath. You will be able to say their name without your throat closing. You will be able to look at photographs from before the end and actually see those moments instead of just seeing the shadow of what was coming. You will have become the Complete Witness—the keeper of the whole story.

Chapter 14

Becoming the Complete Witness

The keeper of the whole story

There is a name for who you are becoming. The Complete Witness.

Not the person who has finished grieving, or who has let go, or who has found acceptance in the way people keep suggesting. Not the person who remembers only the final chapters and calls that the whole story. Someone who holds the whole story. Someone who refuses to let one terrible moment define an entire existence. Someone who can say: I knew this person in their ordinary life, in their boring moments, in their specific and imperfect and entirely themselves moments—and I grieve all of that, not just the ending.

What the Complete Witness Holds

The Complete Witness holds the toast-burning and the misplaced shoes and the irrational loyalty to terrible sports teams alongside the love and the loss. They hold the annoyances and the inside jokes and the predictable ways their person got things wrong. They hold the whole constellation—not the brightest, most painful stars, but all of them, including the ones so ordinary they were barely visible while the person was alive.

The Complete Witness knows something that most grieving people are not told: the ordinary moments are where love actually happened. Not in the peak experiences, the celebrations, the dramatic turning points. In the coffee and the toast and the shoes in the hallway and the Tuesday afternoons that seemed like nothing at the time. Recovering those moments is not indulgence or dwelling. It is the most honest form of grief there is. It is grief for the real person, the whole person, the person who actually existed in ordinary time.

What Becomes Possible

When you can hold the full constellation, something else becomes possible too. You can tell their story. Not the eulogy version—not the highlight reel of their best moments—but the real story. You can tell it to people who never knew them, and those people can get a genuine sense of who they were. You can tell it to people who did know them and

find that your specific memories trigger theirs, and the constellation grows. You can keep their real presence in your life—not as a ghost defined by absence, but as a person defined by who they actually were.

The grief doesn't disappear. It's still grief, it's still loss. But it transforms — from this sharp, unbearable thing into something more like bittersweet gratitude. You can hold the fullness of what you had, not just the devastation of how it ended. That is what it means to become the Complete Witness.

Come Back to This

Return to this guide whenever the fog thickens again. Return to it when the traumatic memories reassert themselves and crowd out the ordinary ones. Return to the Scan practice when you need a back door into dormant memories. Return to the Trace practice when you need to recover the texture of your shared daily life. Return to the Ask question when the constellation feels thin. Return to Record when you need to make recovered memories permanent. Return to Speak when you need to acknowledge the complete person.

Go back and listen to the audio program whenever you need to. The method becomes clearer with repetition. But more importantly, practise. Because you now have everything you need to transform your grief from something unbearable into something you can live with—something that connects you to love instead of just loss, something bittersweet and whole and, finally, true.

Appendix

Recovery Journal — Ten Ordinary Moments

Use these pages to record ordinary, unremarkable moments with your person. Not birthdays or holidays. The time you both got caught in the rain. When they complained about their boss. When you waited together for a late train. Push past the first few that come easily — the magic is in the ones you have to dig for.

Ordinary Moment 1

Ordinary Moment 2

Ordinary Moment 3

Ordinary Moment 4

Ordinary Moment 5

Ordinary Moment 6

Ordinary Moment 7

Ordinary Moment 8

Ordinary Moment 9

Ordinary Moment 10

Constellation Map — The Full Portrait

Use this section to build your complete constellation map. Record memories in specific sensory detail across all dimensions. The goal: hand this to a stranger and they would get a real sense of who your person actually was. Not a eulogy. Not a highlight reel. A real person.

Their essential qualities — specific habits, quirks, rhythms, and tendencies

Shared humour — inside jokes, what made you both laugh, references only you shared

Unguarded moments — when they were most fully themselves

Their physical presence — how they moved, sounded, smelled, occupied a room

Their specific imperfections — what annoyed you, what they did badly, what they got wrong

Ordinary routines in detail — the micro-details recovered through the Trace practice

What others remembered — the ordinary stories collected through the Ask practice

30-Day Memory Recovery Tracker

Track your daily constellation recovery practice across thirty days. Each entry records which STARS step you worked on, which memory dimension you explored, whether you shared a memory with someone else, and whether you practised redirecting from the traumatic memory. At the end of each week, note what shifted in your access to your person's full constellation.

Week 1

Day 1: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 2: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 3: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 4: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 5: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 6: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 7: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Week 1: New stars recovered this week — ordinary memories that returned:

What shifted in how I see and carry my person's full story:

Week 2

Day 8: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 9: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 10: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 11: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 12: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 13: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 14: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Week 2: New stars recovered this week — ordinary memories that returned:

What shifted in how I see and carry my person's full story:

Week 3

Day 15: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 16: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 17: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 18: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 19: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 20: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 21: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Week 3: New stars recovered this week — ordinary memories that returned:

What shifted in how I see and carry my person's full story:

Week 4

Day 22: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 23: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 24: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 25: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 26: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 27: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Day 28: STARS step: ____ Dimension explored: _____ Shared a memory: Y/N Redirected: Y/N

Week 4: New stars recovered this week — ordinary memories that returned:

What shifted in how I see and carry my person's full story:

After 30 days: What does the constellation look like now compared to when you began? What ordinary moments have you recovered that you had thought were lost? Write about who your person is becoming again — in their full, real, complete dimensionality.

How to Recover the Complete Person You Lost — Not Just the Grief-Edited Version
[Companion Guide to the Audio Program](#)