

THE
DEPTH
SIGNAL
METHOD

HOW TO NAVIGATE
YEAR 2 OF GRIEF

THE DEPTH SIGNAL FRAMEWORK

THE DEPTH SIGNAL METHOD

How to Navigate Year Two of Grief When Everyone Thinks You Should Be Over It

A Guide for the Depth Navigator

[Companion Guide to The Depth Signal Method Audio Program](#)

The Depth Signal Method

How to Navigate Year Two of Grief When Everyone Thinks You Should Be Over It

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[Companion Guide to The Depth Signal Method Audio Program](#)

First Edition

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A Note Before We Begin

You are holding this guide because nobody prepared you for this. Everyone warned you the first year would be hard. Nobody warned you about the second. Nobody told you that the support would vanish at exactly the moment the shock wore off, or that you would feel worse—not better—once the casseroles stopped coming and the world expected you to be done.

If you are somewhere between twelve and twenty-four months since your loss, and you are discovering that you feel more isolated, more exhausted, and more desperate than you did in those raw early months, you are not broken. You are not grieving wrong. You are not weak. You are in what this guide calls the deep water year—the phase where the pressure is greatest and the support is least, where the shock has dissolved and the permanent reality has set in, and where virtually no one around you understands what that actually feels like.

The framework at the centre of this guide is called DEPTH. Five steps that address not just the internal experience of grief but the relational and systemic forces that make year two uniquely devastating. Document your actual grief reality. Express it clearly through Depth Signals. Give yourself the Permission society has revoked. Tend your continuing bond with your person. Harbor in a community that can hold the long journey.

You are not sinking. You are not failing. You are not stuck. You are just deeper than anyone else can see. And this method is going to show you exactly how to navigate these depths until you are ready to rise — at your own pace, on your own timeline.

The identity you are building through this practice has a name: the Depth Navigator. Not someone who has stopped grieving. Not someone who has moved on or met the cultural deadline. Someone who has stopped pretending to be at the surface when they are in the depths, and who has built the tools, language, and community to survive the deep water year with skill and self-compassion. Use this guide alongside the audio program

or on its own. Return to it every time the pressure intensifies and you need reminding: you are right on schedule, and these waters can be navigated.

Chapter 1

The Deep Water Year

What nobody tells you about months twelve to twenty-four

You know what nobody tells you about the second year of grief? It is when everyone else's sympathy runs out just as you are hitting the absolute worst of it.

Right now, somewhere between twelve and twenty-four months since your loss, you are noticing something disturbing. People have stopped asking how you are doing. The texts have dried up. Family members change the subject when you mention your person's name. Friends who were practically camped on your doorstep in that first month now seem uncomfortable if you bring up your grief. And the most confusing part? You actually feel worse now than you did in those early, numb months when everyone was bringing casseroles and checking in.

What Year Two Actually Feels Like

Maybe you are waking up with a crushing weight on your chest that was not there in year one. Maybe you are experiencing waves of anger that shock you with their intensity—rage at your person for leaving, at the world for continuing, at yourself for still being this sad. Maybe the brain fog has gotten worse instead of better, and you cannot remember simple things or follow conversations. Maybe you are avoiding places and people connected to your loss in ways you did not in the first year, because the reality has become more real, not less. Maybe you are exhausted in a way that sleep does not touch—a bone-deep fatigue that makes getting through a normal day feel like climbing a mountain. Maybe you are experiencing anxiety or panic attacks for the first time.

Signs you are in the deep water year:

- You feel worse now than in the early months of grief
- Support has withdrawn but your pain has not
- You are having meltdowns in private — cars, showers, parking lots — because those are the only places left where it feels safe to fall apart

- You are exhausted in a way that sleep cannot touch
- Brain fog has worsened, not improved
- You are working twice as hard to look okay while feeling twice as bad
- Physical symptoms: headaches, stomach pain, mysterious aches that doctors cannot explain
- Anxiety or panic attacks, possibly for the first time
- You have caught yourself thinking:
‘I cannot do this for the rest of my life’ or
‘I do not know how to exist in a world without them’

None of this means you are broken.

None of this means you are grieving wrong.

The second year of grief is consistently reported by griever as harder than the first.

You are not falling behind in your grief.

You are right on schedule.

You are just in the phase nobody prepared you for.

The Invisible Shift

In year one, when you were trying to process your emotions, you had permission to be processing. When you needed to cry, people expected tears. When you could not concentrate at work, people understood. The internal work of grief was hard, but you had external support while doing it. Year two? You are doing the exact same internal work—actually, often harder work, because now you are dealing with the permanent reality rather than the shocking disbelief. But you are doing it in an environment that has systematically removed all the supports that made that work possible. And no one prepared you for that shift.

You are not sinking. You are not failing. You are not stuck. You are just deeper than anyone else can see. And there are specific tools for navigating these depths—tools that acknowledge where you actually are, not where everyone expects you to be.

Describe where you are right now. What are the specific ways year two has felt harder than year one? What is the gap between how you appear to others and how you actually feel?

Chapter 2

Why Everything You've Tried Has Failed

The incomplete map everyone gave you

You have tried everything, have you not? You have read the books about the five stages of grief. You have gone to the support groups, at least for those first few months. You have practised gratitude, done the journaling, maybe even tried therapy. And some of it helped. But here you are, still underwater, still struggling to breathe, still feeling like you are in the darkest depths while everyone on the surface is waving and assuming you are fine.

Here is what nobody told you: most grief advice is designed for a problem that does not quite exist in the way it assumes. All those strategies—the well-meaning frameworks about processing and healing and moving through stages—are built on a fundamental assumption that your main challenge is internal. That grief is primarily a private, psychological process happening inside your head and heart. So the advice focuses there: process your feelings, identify your stage, work through your emotions, create meaning from loss. And yes, that internal work matters. But it only addresses the surface layer of why year two feels impossible.

Swimming with Weights

It is like someone teaching you advanced swimming techniques while ignoring that you are trying to swim with weights chained to your ankles. The technique is not wrong. It is just incomplete. Because it completely misses the fact that your environment has fundamentally changed in ways that make everything harder, and none of those internal coping strategies account for it.

In year one, your environment was structured to accommodate your grief. Year two, you are doing the same internal work—often harder work—but inside a system that has removed every accommodation that made that work possible. And on top of that, you have probably fallen into what this method calls the Suppression Trap: trying to push through the external pressure, to perform functionality, to be the version of yourself

everyone expects. Because the alternative—continuing to assert your grief, continuing to ask for accommodations, continuing to be the one who reminds everyone of death and sadness—feels harder than just pretending.

THE SUPPRESSION TRAP — what happens when you perform recovery:

You suppress your grief to meet external expectations.'
You do not actually heal faster.'
You push the grief deeper, where it becomes more complex',
and ultimately more difficult to address.'

The suppression creates a split:',
There is the you that everyone sees — functional, fine, moved on.',
And there is the you that actually exists — still grieving',
still struggling, still underwater.'

Maintaining that split requires enormous energy.'
You are not just dealing with grief anymore.'
You are dealing with grief plus the constant performance of not-grief',
Every interaction becomes theatre.'

And the suppression intensifies the grief.',
Because now you are not just sad about the loss.',
You are isolated in that sadness.',
In year one, grief was witnessed.',
In year two, when you suppress it, you are grieving in secret.',
Crying in your car. In the shower.',
Late at night when everyone is asleep.',
The grief does not diminish.',
It just loses its witnesses.'

And unwitnessed grief is uniquely painful.'

But you are not defective. You are up against something that nobody has named for you yet. The Depth Signal Method is going to name it.

Which approaches have you tried that helped temporarily but are no longer touching this depth of pain? Where have you fallen into the Suppression Trap — performing recovery for others while still drowning privately?

Chapter 3

The Compassion Cliff

Why support disappears exactly when you need it most

What is really making year two so devastatingly difficult is something called the Compassion Cliff. And until you understand it, nothing else will quite make sense.

The Compassion Cliff is the invisible cultural timeline that determines when others believe your grief should be over. It is the point at which supporters withdraw their presence, acknowledgement, and permission for your continued mourning. And here is the cruel irony: the Compassion Cliff hits exactly when the shock wears off and the real, lasting absence begins.

What the First Year Actually Was

In the first year, you were in shock. Not the shock of disbelief exactly—you felt real pain. But there was a protective buffer. Part of your brain still had not fully accepted the permanent nature of the loss. You were still moving through firsts: first birthday without them, first holidays, first anniversary. Those firsts were brutal, but they were also distracting. They gave you something specific to grieve, something concrete to get through. And crucially, you still had ambient hope—a subtle sense that maybe this would get easier, that the one-year mark might bring some relief. There was a finish line visible on the horizon.

Year two is when all of that falls away. The shock fully dissolves. Your brain can no longer protect you with any form of disbelief. The absence is permanent, and you know it in your bones. There are no more firsts to get through—just the long, stretching infinity of seconds without them. And that ambient hope is gone. You crossed the finish line everyone promised you, and you are not healed. Which means there is no finish line. This is just life now.

The Cliff Drops

This is when you need support most. This is when the pressure is greatest, when you are in the deepest, darkest water. And this is exactly when the Compassion Cliff drops everyone away. Because the same cultural timeline that told your supporters to be extra

compassionate in year one is now telling them you are fine. The same invisible script that prompted the check-ins and the casseroles has flipped. Now it says: they have had a year, they have processed, they should be reintegrating, and our job is to help them move forward by treating them normally again.

THE COMPASSION CLIFF — the systemic forces working against year two grief:

THE CALENDAR: Our entire society runs on annual cycles.',
After twelve months, the workplace expects full productivity.',
Social circles expect your availability to return.',
Family members expect you to step back into your old roles.',
Insurance companies, HR departments, social scripts — all reset at twelve months.',

THE INVISIBLE PRESSURE: These are not malicious systems.',
That is what makes them so insidious.',
Nobody is choosing to make your grief harder.',
These are just default settings. Cultural norms operating invisibly.',
Which means there is no villain to confront, no policy to protest.',
Just this ambient pressure that increases around you, slowly',
like water pressure as you descend deeper.',

THE FLIP: Your friends are not trying to abandon you.',
They are following the social script they have been handed.',
Your family is not trying to be insensitive.',
They are operating on the timeline they absorbed from every',
movie, book, and cultural message they have ever encountered.',
Even you may be judging yourself for not being 'better' by now',
because you have internalised the same timeline.',

THE RESULT: You are fighting your own grief',
while simultaneously fighting a system that tells you',
that fight should already be over.',

Once you can see the Compassion Cliff, once you understand it is not a reflection of your worth or your healing but rather a predictable cultural pattern, you can start to work with it instead of against it. You can find your air. You can signal your depth. You can survive these dark waters and eventually, actually surface.

Where has the Compassion Cliff been most painful in your specific experience? Which system — workplace, family, social circle, your own internal voice — has been most relentless about the twelve-month timeline?

Chapter 4

The Depth Signal Method

A sustainable practice for the invisible phase of grief

The Depth Signal Method is different from anything you have tried before because it does not ask you to get better faster, grieve more quietly, or somehow need less support. Instead, it teaches you how to make your depth visible again—how to signal to others that you are still underwater, exactly where you are, and what you need. It teaches you to rebuild support systems actually designed for the long journey of grief, not just the socially acceptable first few months. And most importantly, it gives you permission to still be grieving, to still need help, to still be in the depths even though everyone expected you to be done by now.

The method is built around the acronym DEPTH—because that is exactly what you are working with: the depth of your grief that no one else can see. These five steps work together to create something crucial: a sustainable grief practice. Not a healing timeline. Not a recovery plan. But a way of living with grief that acknowledges it is still here, honours what you lost, and gets you the support you actually need for however long you need it.

The DEPTH Framework

D DOCUMENT

Keep a Depth Log for seven days — a ruthlessly honest record of your actual grief reality: when waves hit, what triggered them, how intense they were, and what you actually needed. Most people in year two have lost touch with their own grief experience. The Depth Log brings it back to the surface.

E EXPRESS

Send Depth Signals to three people in your life — clear, specific communications that tell people exactly where you are and what would actually help. People have not abandoned you on purpose. They believe you are done. Your job is to tell them the truth.

P
PERMISSION

Write your own Grief Bill of Rights — five to ten explicit permission statements that directly counter the expectations you are feeling. You have internalised all the messages about how you should be done by now. This step actively rewrites them.

T
TEND

Establish a Continuing Bond Ritual — a regular, intentional practice that honours your ongoing relationship with your person. They do not stop being important because they died. Your relationship with them does not end. It changes form, but it continues.

H
HARBOR

Build a Long Grief Alliance — at least one community that understands and accepts long-term grief, with a commitment to connecting twice monthly. Your original support network was designed for acute grief. You need a different kind of community now.

The chapters that follow walk through each DEPTH step in full detail—with specific exercises, real examples, and exactly what to do when a step feels impossible. Read them in sequence before beginning the full practice.

Before reading further: which DEPTH step feels most urgent for where you are right now? Which will require the most courage? Write about both.

Chapter 5

The DEPTH Framework

How the five steps work together as a complete system

Before going deep into each step, it helps to understand how the five elements of DEPTH function together—and why each step addresses a different dimension of the year-two crisis.

The Logic of the System

Document comes first because most people in year two have completely lost touch with their actual grief experience. You have gotten so good at functioning, at pushing through, at telling people you are fine, that you no longer even know when you are struggling or what you need. You have learned to suppress the signals automatically. Before you can send signals to others or claim permission or tend a bond, you need to know the truth of your own experience. The Depth Log creates that truth.

Express comes second because knowing your depth privately is not enough. The crisis of year two is fundamentally relational: your pain has become invisible to others.

Document gives you a clear picture of where you are; Express gives you the tools to communicate that reality to the people around you. You cannot get support you have not asked for, and you cannot ask for it if you do not have language for what you need.

Permission comes third because even after you have documented and expressed, the internal voice will still be telling you that you have been going on too long, that you are too much, that you should be better by now. The Grief Bill of Rights directly and repeatedly counters that voice. It is the step that addresses not the external expectations but the internalised ones—the judgment you carry inside yourself.

Tend comes fourth because beneath the relational crisis and the shame is the most personal loss of all: the feeling that you are supposed to be letting go of your person, severing the connection, moving away from rather than toward the relationship that death changed but did not end. Tend gives that relationship official structure and permission.

Harbor comes fifth and is what makes everything sustainable. Document, Express, Permission, and Tend are all individual practices. Harbor is the community that holds them—the Long Grief Alliance that normalises your ongoing grief, witnesses your depth without flinching, and reminds you that you are not alone in the deep water year.

THE DEPTH SEQUENCE — what each step addresses:

DOCUMENT: Your relationship with yourself',

↓ Restores honest contact with your actual grief reality',

EXPRESS: Your relationship with others',

↓ Makes your invisible grief visible through specific communication',

PERMISSION: Your internal voice',

↓ Counters the shame and self-judgment of the internalised timeline',

TEND: Your relationship with your person',

↓ Gives structure and permission to the bond that death changed but did not end',

HARBOR: Your relationship with community',

↓ Builds the Long Grief Alliance that holds the long journey',

Skip Document and you build everything on a distorted picture of where you are.',

Skip Express and you keep suffering in invisible silence.',

Skip Permission and the internal timeline keeps undermining everything else.',

Skip Tend and you keep feeling guilty for still wanting connection.',

Skip Harbor and you do the right individual work in unsustainable isolation.',

The Depth Navigator Identity

Woven through all five steps is an identity you are building: the Depth Navigator. Not someone who has finished grieving, or who has met the cultural deadline. Someone who has stopped pretending to be at the surface when they are in the depths. Someone who knows how to read their own grief waters, send clear signals about where they are, claim their right to still be underwater, tend the relationship that death changed, and find community that can hold the long journey. You become the Depth Navigator not when the grief is over, but when you stop fighting where you actually are and start navigating it with skill.

Chapter 6

Document

Telling the truth about where you actually are

Document is the first step of DEPTH and the one that most people find immediately transformative—not because it changes anything about their grief, but because it finally shows them the truth of an experience they have been systematically minimising and hiding, even from themselves. For the next seven days, you are going to keep what this method calls a Depth Log.

The Depth Log

This is not a gratitude journal. This is not a place to record how well you are coping or list all the ways you are healing. This is a ruthlessly honest record of your actual grief reality. Here is what you track each day: when grief waves hit you, what triggered them, how intense they were, and most importantly, what you actually needed in that moment. Not what you think you should need. Not what would be convenient to need. But what would have genuinely helped.

Each evening, take five minutes to write down the moments when grief showed up that day. It might look like this: ‘Tuesday 2pm—saw his favourite brand of coffee at the grocery store, felt like I could not breathe, needed to call someone who would let me cry without trying to fix it.’ Or: ‘Thursday morning—woke up from a dream about her, spent an hour unable to get out of bed, needed permission to be late to work without having to pretend I had the flu.’

THE DEPTH LOG — what to track each day:

TIME AND TRIGGER:',

When did the grief wave hit? What caused it?',

Be specific. Not ‘felt sad today’ but ‘heard their song on the radio at 8am’.',

INTENSITY:',

How strong was the wave?',

A number from 1–10 works, or descriptive words.',
Surface, mid-depth, deep.',

WHAT YOU ACTUALLY NEEDED:',
Not what you got. Not what would have been convenient.',
What would genuinely have helped in that moment.',
A phone call. Permission to cry. To have someone say their name.',
To skip the meeting. To be held.',

WHAT YOU DID INSTEAD:',
The performance. The push-through.',
The smile you put on.',
Naming this gap — between what you needed and what you did —',
is some of the most important work in year two.',

After seven days, review for patterns:',
Are there certain times of day when grief hits hardest?',
Specific triggers that consistently knock you down?',
Needs that come up repeatedly that are not being met?',
This is your map.',
This is evidence that you are still underwater.',
This is proof that you are not crazy or weak or grieving wrong.',

Marcus, whose wife died of cancer, started the Depth Log at month fourteen convinced something was wrong with him because he could not seem to ‘get over it.’ After a week he came back stunned: ‘I thought I was mostly fine with occasional bad moments. But it turns out I’m having grief waves five or six times a day. I’ve just gotten so good at pushing through them that I didn’t even register them anymore.’ That is what the Document step does. It shows you the truth of your experience so you can stop gaslighting yourself about how you are doing.

Start your Depth Log right now. Write one entry from today: a moment when grief showed up, what triggered it, how intense it was, and what you actually needed. Be ruthlessly honest.

Chapter 7

Express

Sending clear signals about where you are and what you need

Express is the second step of DEPTH and the one that directly addresses the invisibility problem. Once you have a clear picture of your grief reality from the Depth Log, you are ready to start making that depth visible to others—by sending what this method calls Depth Signals.

Why Your Support Disappeared

The people in your life have not abandoned you on purpose. They have stopped offering support because they genuinely believe you are done grieving. They do not see your depth because you have gotten too good at hiding it, and because society has taught them that grief ends at the one-year mark. So if you want support in year two and beyond, you have to actively signal that you are still underwater. You have to tell them.

The Express step involves sending Depth Signals to three specific people in your life. These should be people who supported you early on but whose support has faded, or people you think might be capable of understanding if you just told them the truth. Use this template, adjusting for your situation: ‘I’m in month X of grief. Most people think I’m done, but I’m actually in the hardest part. The shock has worn off and the permanent reality is setting in. Here is what would help right now...’ and then list one to three specific, concrete things they could do.

The Power of Specificity

EXPRESS — what Depth Signals look like in practice:

NOT: ‘I need support.’,

YES: ‘Would you be willing to call me every Thursday evening just to check in,’
even if I sound okay?’,

YES: 'Could you come over Saturday morning and help me go through some of his clothes?'

I've been avoiding it for months."

YES: 'I need someone who will let me talk about her without changing the subject.'
Could we have coffee monthly where I have permission to tell stories',
even if they make you uncomfortable?'"

What you are doing here:',

- Educating people about the invisible grief phase',
- Giving them specific actions they can actually take',
- Testing your support network to see who can show up for the long haul',
versus who was only capable of short-term crisis support',

Do not soften your message.',

Do not add: 'I know I should be better by now',

or 'I'm sorry to still be struggling with this.'",

Your Depth Signal should be clear and unapologetic.',

You are still grieving because you suffered a major loss.',

That is not something to apologise for.',

Send these three signals within the next week.',

Then pay attention to what happens.',

Some people will surprise you by showing up beautifully',
once they understand you still need help.',

Others will give you the 'but it's been so long' response.',

Both responses are valuable information.',

Jennifer, who lost her teenage son, sent Depth Signals to her two sisters and her best friend from college at month fifteen. Her older sister responded immediately: 'I had no idea you were still struggling so much. I thought you seemed okay. Yes, let's talk every week.' Her younger sister sent back something about focusing on her living children and moving forward. Her college friend admitted she did not know how to help but was willing to learn. Jennifer told her later: 'Sending those signals was terrifying but also clarifying. I stopped wasting energy on my younger sister's judgment and invested in the relationships that could actually hold my grief. It changed everything.'

Name three people you could send a Depth Signal to this week. For each person, write the specific, concrete thing you would ask for — not ‘I need support’ but exactly what support would look like.

Chapter 8

Permission

Reclaiming the rights society withdrew at twelve months

Permission is the third step of DEPTH and the one that addresses what may be the most insidious dimension of year-two grief: the judgment you are carrying inside yourself. Not just what others expect of you—but what you have come to expect of yourself. You have internalised all the messages about how you should be done by now, how you should be moving on, how you should stop talking about your person so much. The Permission step involves writing your own Grief Bill of Rights—a document that explicitly gives you permission to grieve in whatever way and for however long you need.

Writing Your Grief Bill of Rights

Sit down and write out five to ten permission statements that directly counter the expectations you are feeling from others or from yourself. Start each one with ‘I give myself permission to...’ and then complete it with something you need but feel like you are not allowed to have anymore. These are not aspirational statements. They are corrections to the distorted script you have been living under.

PERMISSION — examples of what your Grief Bill of Rights might include:

‘I give myself permission to still cry in public’,
even though it has been more than a year.”,

‘I give myself permission to talk about him at family dinners’,
even if it makes people uncomfortable.”,

‘I give myself permission to skip events that feel too hard’,
without having to justify why.”,

‘I give myself permission to still have days’,
where I can barely function.”,

'I give myself permission to be angry about the platitudes',
people offer.'",

'I give myself permission to maintain a relationship',
with my person even though they are gone.'",

'I give myself permission to tell people I am having a hard day',
without making up a fake reason like a headache or bad sleep.'",

'I give myself permission to change or abandon traditions',
that no longer work without guilt.'",

Write these down on actual paper or create a document on your phone.'
Put it somewhere you will see it daily.'
On your bathroom mirror.'
As your phone wallpaper.'
On your desk.'

Your Grief Bill of Rights is a living document.'
Add to it as you discover new permissions you need.'
Adjust it as your grief evolves.'

Diane, whose mother died at month eighteen, was still crying every morning in the shower but then putting on a smile and pretending to be fine all day at work. When she created her Grief Bill of Rights, she included: 'I give myself permission to tell people I'm having a hard day without making up a fake reason.' It seemed like a small thing. She said it was revolutionary. 'Just being honest about why I'm off, even briefly, meant I stopped burning so much energy on the performance. I could just be sad when I was sad.' That is what the Permission step does. It stops the energy drain of self-judgment so that energy can go toward actually grieving instead of toward performing recovery.

Write your first three Grief Bill of Rights statements right now. What are the permissions you most need that society, your family, or your own internal voice has revoked? Start with 'I give myself permission to...'

Chapter 9

Tend

Honouring the relationship that death changed but did not end

Tend is the fourth step of DEPTH and the one that addresses what may be the most personally painful pressure of year two: the feeling that you are supposed to be letting go of your person, severing the connection, moving away from rather than toward the relationship that death changed but did not end. Society tells you that healing means moving on. But what you know in your heart is that moving on feels like a second death—like erasing them all over again.

The Continuing Bond

The Tend step is about establishing what grief therapists call a continuing bond—a regular and intentional practice that honours your ongoing relationship with your person. Because here is the truth that no one tells you: they do not stop being important just because they died. Your relationship with them does not end. It changes form, but it continues. And you need a practice that acknowledges and tends to that continuing connection. Choose one Continuing Bond Ritual that feels meaningful to you and commit to doing it regularly. The ritual should have three qualities: it should be regular and scheduled, it should involve some form of active engagement with your person's memory, and it should feel meaningful rather than obligatory.

TEND — examples of Continuing Bond Rituals:

Every Sunday evening, write a letter to your person',
telling them about your week, what you are struggling with',
what you wish you could ask them.',
You do not send these letters anywhere.',
The writing itself is the practice.'

Every month on the anniversary of their death',
spend an hour looking through photos and videos',
actively remembering specific moments and stories.'

A seasonal ritual: do something they loved,',
visit a place that was meaningful to them,',
or cook their favourite meal while telling stories about them.'

A small altar or memory space in your home that you tend weekly:',
changing flowers, adding new photos,',
or simply sitting with for a few minutes.'

The specific form does not matter.',
What matters is that it is yours, it is regular,',
and it actively honours the fact that this person is still important to you.'

Research shows the opposite of what most people fear:',
people who maintain healthy continuing bonds',
actually navigate grief more successfully',
than people who try to completely let go.',
You do not heal by forgetting.',
You heal by finding a new way to love them.'

Robert, whose partner of twenty years died, established a ritual of going to their favourite coffee shop every Saturday morning. He would order two coffees, drink one and pour the other out, and spend thirty minutes writing in a journal as if he was catching his partner up on his life. He said: 'People think it's morbid, but it's actually the most peaceful part of my week. It's the only time I don't have to pretend he's not still central to my life. I can just be in relationship with him.' What the Tend step does is give you official permission to maintain a connection that everyone else thinks you should be severing, and create a container for that connection so it does not have to leak out in ways that feel frightening or out of control.

What would your Continuing Bond Ritual be? What form of regular, intentional connection with your person feels most meaningful rather than obligatory? Describe it in enough detail that you could begin it this week.

Chapter 10

Harbor

Building the Long Grief Alliance for the journey ahead

Harbor is the fifth and final step of DEPTH and the one that makes everything else sustainable. Because here is what you have probably discovered: most of your original support network was designed for acute grief, for the crisis phase. Those people are exhausted now, or they think you are done, or they were never equipped for long-term grief in the first place. You need a different kind of community now. You need what this method calls a Long Grief Alliance.

What a Long Grief Alliance Is

The Harbor step involves identifying or creating at least one community that understands and accepts long-term grief, and committing to connecting with that community twice monthly at minimum. This is not about replacing your existing relationships. This is about adding a specific support structure designed for people who are still underwater when everyone expects them to be on shore. Your Long Grief Alliance might take several forms: a grief support group specifically for people past the first year, an online community of long-term grievers, regular sessions with a grief-informed therapist who understands there is no timeline, or a small group of other long-term grievers who meet monthly to talk honestly about the ongoing reality of living with loss.

The key qualities of your Long Grief Alliance are these: the people in it must understand that grief does not end, they must be willing to hear your ongoing pain without trying to fix it, and they must be stable enough in their own journey to hold space for yours. You are not looking for people who will tell you to move on faster. You are looking for people who will normalise still being underwater.

HARBOR — how to find or build your Long Grief Alliance:

SEARCH: Look for grief support groups with phrases like',
'ongoing grief', 'long-term loss', or 'beyond the first year'.'

Check online communities on Reddit, Facebook,'
or specialised grief forums.'

CREATE: If you cannot find what you need, create it.'
Post in a local community group or online space:',
'Looking for others navigating grief beyond the first year.'
Anyone want to meet monthly for coffee and honest conversation?''

ADAPT: If you absolutely cannot access organised support,'
find even one other person navigating long-term grief.'
Meet for coffee twice a month. Text each other on hard days.'
Two people can be a Long Grief Alliance',
if they are both committed to honouring ongoing grief.'

COMMIT: Mark it in your calendar like any other important appointment.'
This is your harbour — the place where you can drop anchor and rest',
in the depths without having to explain yourself.'
Where you tell the truth about how hard month sixteen is.'
About how you still hear their voice.'
About how angry you are that everyone else has moved on.'

Your Long Grief Alliance is not about wallowing in sadness forever.'
It is about having a place where your ongoing grief is normal and expected',
which paradoxically makes it easier to engage with the rest of your life.'

Susan, who lost her adult daughter, joined an online community for bereaved parents at month twenty. She said: 'I didn't realise how much I'd been holding back with my regular friends until I found people who just got it. In that community, no one flinches when I say I'm still devastated two years later. No one tells me to focus on my other children. They just say "yes, this is the worst thing, and it doesn't get better in the way people think it does." That validation saved me.' When you know you have a harbour where you can be fully honest twice a month, you can do the necessary compartmentalising the rest of the time without it feeling like betrayal or suppression.

What would your Long Grief Alliance look like? Name the form it would take and one concrete step you will take this week to find or begin building it.

Chapter 11

The Obstacles Ahead

Seven barriers — and why none of them should stop you

Even with the DEPTH framework fully understood, you will face resistance. Seven specific obstacles are predictable—and because they are predictable, you can prepare for them.

Obstacles One and Two

The first: ‘I’ve already alienated everyone by being too much too long. It’s too late to send Depth Signals.’ You have not been too much. You have been grieving. And yes, some people may have pulled back because your pain triggered something uncomfortable in them. But the Depth Signal is not about demanding that people who failed you suddenly show up. It is about clearly communicating with people who might show up if they just knew you still needed them. Send the signals. You might be surprised who responds.

The second: ‘Keeping a Depth Log will just make me focus on grief more. Won’t that make it worse?’ This is the most common fear, and it is based on a misunderstanding. You are already experiencing all these grief waves and triggers. The Depth Log does not create them. It just makes them visible. And what you will actually discover is that tracking your grief gives you a sense of agency that reduces the feeling of being ambushed by it. When you can see patterns, when you can predict that Saturday mornings are especially hard, you feel less crazy and more capable of navigating those moments.

Obstacles Three Through Seven

OBSTACLE THREE: ‘My person wouldn’t want me to still be this sad.’

This is almost always based on nothing your person actually said.',
You are projecting what you think you should do onto what they would have wanted.',
But did your person love you? Did they value their relationship with you?'

Then why would they want that relationship to just end and be forgotten?',
The Tend step is about bringing forward the love in a new form.',
Your person would want you to find a way to live a full life again, yes.',
But that life can and should include maintaining your bond with them.',
Those two things are not in conflict.'

OBSTACLE FOUR: 'I can't afford therapy and there are no grief groups nearby.'

This is a real practical barrier, and it is acknowledged.',
But the Harbor step does not require expensive therapy or perfect local resources.',
There are free and low-cost online grief communities.',
There are phone-based grief support lines.',
There are apps and forums and social media groups for long-term grief.',
Two people meeting for coffee twice a month can be a Long Grief Alliance',
if both are committed to honouring the reality of ongoing grief.'

OBSTACLE FIVE: 'I'm worried the Continuing Bond Ritual will become unhealthy.'

A healthy continuing bond is boundaried, intentional, and life-affirming.',
Scheduled rather than consuming your every waking moment.',
An unhealthy attachment is when you cannot function without constantly',
referencing your person, when you are frozen in the past.',
The Tend step is specifically designed to create the healthy version.',
If you are worried, build in a monthly check:',
'Is this ritual helping me feel connected in a way that brings comfort?',
Or is it keeping me from engaging with my present life?''

OBSTACLE SIX: 'What if I try all this and I'm still drowning?'

Then we acknowledge that grief is sometimes bigger than any method.',
The Depth Signal Method is not a magic cure.',
If you work through these steps and are still unable to function',
if you are having thoughts of self-harm',
if grief is completely consuming your life',
please seek professional help.',
This method is designed for painful but navigable long-term grief.',
It is not a replacement for therapy or medical intervention

when those are needed.'

OBSTACLE SEVEN: 'People are going to judge me for still grieving so hard.'

Yes, some will.'

But here is the shift:',

their judgment is about their discomfort with mortality and loss',

not about you doing something wrong.',

You are going to be judged either way.',

You can be judged while pretending to be fine and suffocating inside.',

Or you can be judged while getting your needs met',

and honouring your loss honestly.',

Choose the second option.',

Which obstacle feels most immediately present for you? Write the specific response you will give yourself the next time it appears.

Chapter 12

Why This Works

Six mechanisms that make the Depth Signal Method effective

So why does the Depth Signal Method actually work when so many other approaches leave you still struggling in year two? There are six specific mechanisms.

Mechanisms One Through Three

First, it is based on reality rather than ideals. Most grief advice is built around how grief is supposed to go. The Depth Signal Method starts with how grief actually goes—which is that it continues much longer than anyone acknowledges and becomes invisible to others even while it remains overwhelming to you. By naming that reality and working with it instead of against it, you stop fighting yourself and start building structures that match your actual experience.

Second, it makes the invisible visible. The core problem in year two is that your pain no longer has external markers. You do not look like you are grieving. You are functioning. So everyone assumes you are fine. The Depth Signal Method gives you specific tools for making your ongoing grief visible again through documentation, explicit communication, ritual, and community. When your depth becomes visible, you can get appropriate support for where you actually are.

Third, it is sustainable. You are not trying to white-knuckle your way through grief or force yourself to heal faster. You are building practices and systems that acknowledge grief is a long-term reality that needs long-term support. The difference between ‘I’ll just power through’ and ‘I’ll build sustainable practices’ is the difference between burning out at month eighteen and being able to navigate year five and beyond.

Mechanisms Four Through Six

MECHANISM FOUR: It addresses the relational dimension of grief.

So much grief work focuses only on your internal experience.’

But the crisis of year two is largely relational:',
support systems falling away, feeling abandoned',
not knowing how to ask for help.',
The Express and Harbor steps specifically target that relational dimension.',
Rebuilding support systems that can actually hold long-term grief.',

MECHANISM FIVE: It validates continuing bonds instead of demanding you let go.

Modern grief therapy has increasingly recognised that healthy grieving',
does not mean severing your connection to your person.',
It means transforming that connection.',
The Tend step is built on this research-backed understanding.',
When you have permission and structure for maintaining your relationship',
you stop feeling crazy for still feeling connected.',
That reduces shame and increases your capacity to engage with your ongoing life.',

MECHANISM SIX: It returns agency to you.

Grief is fundamentally disempowering. It happened to you.',
You did not choose it. You cannot control it.',
The Depth Signal Method gives you back some power:',
You cannot control your grief timeline',
but you can document it clearly.',
You cannot make people understand',
but you can send clear signals about what you need.',
You cannot bring your person back',
but you can tend your relationship with them.',
You cannot make society accept long-term grief',
but you can find communities that do.',

Each step returns a measure of agency in a situation',
where you have felt powerless.',

***This is not about fixing you, because you are not
broken. This is not about speeding up your grief,
because there is no schedule for how long love lasts.***

This is about creating visibility, building support, giving permission, maintaining connection, and finding community for a journey you are on whether anyone else acknowledges it or not.

Which of the six mechanisms addresses something that no previous approach has touched for you? Write about what it would mean to have that dimension of year-two grief finally acknowledged and supported.

Chapter 13

Your 30-Day Plan

Building the Depth Navigator practice from this moment forward

Understanding the Depth Signal Method and actually living 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: Name One Signal

Right now, identify just one depth signal you are experiencing today. Do not overthink this. Maybe it is the familiar ache you have been carrying since you woke up—that is likely a Surface Signal. Maybe it is the sudden intensity that hit yesterday when someone mentioned your person's name—possibly a Mid-depth Signal. Or perhaps you have been feeling that bone-deep exhaustion and disconnection—a Deep Signal. Just name it to yourself. Say internally: 'I am experiencing a Surface Signal' or whichever depth fits. This simple act of naming without judgment is your first step as a Depth Navigator. You are learning to read your waters instead of being tossed around by waves you do not understand.

Today: One Depth-Appropriate Response

In the next few hours, once you finish reading, do one depth-appropriate response for the signal you just identified. If you named a Surface Signal: choose one grounding technique, perhaps five minutes writing in a journal about a memory that surfaced today, or making yourself tea in the mug they gave you and letting yourself feel close to them through that object. If you identified a Mid-depth Signal: name the trigger and complete one integration exercise—write down the approaching anniversary or the difficult memory and ask yourself what your person would want this moment to include. And if you recognised a Deep Signal: reach out to one person in your support ecosystem. Send one text: 'Having a hard day in year two. Just needed to tell someone who understands.' That is it. You are practising the essential skill of asking for support before you are drowning, not after.

Tomorrow and This Week

YOUR DAILY DEPTH NAVIGATOR PRACTICE:

EACH MORNING: Set a reminder called 'Depth Check.'',
When it goes off, take sixty seconds to scan your system.',
What signals are present today? Don't judge them, just observe them.',
Then choose one corresponding practice from the method.',
Sixty seconds of awareness, one practice.',
That is all.',

ALSO TOMORROW: Identify one boundary you need to set.',
Who or what is the source of pressure you are feeling in year two?',
Choose one boundary and decide on the exact language:',
'I'm not ready to go through their clothes yet',
and I need you to respect that timeline.'',
Or: 'I'm learning that grief doesn't follow a schedule',
and I need to honour my own process.'',
You do not have to deliver this tomorrow — just craft it.',

DAYS THREE AND FOUR: Begin adding Continuing Bond practices.',
Choose one daily ritual that keeps connection alive.',
Morning coffee where you still set out their mug.',
A five-minute conversation with them while driving.',
These are not signs you are stuck.',
They are signs you are honouring an ongoing relationship.',

DAYS FIVE AND SIX: Expect resistance.',
You will wake up and think: 'This isn't working.'',
That resistance is often a Deep Signal disguised as apathy.',
When you notice it, that is exactly when you need the method most.',
On that hard day, do the absolute minimum:',
name one signal, take five deep breaths, text one supportive person.',
That is enough.',

ALSO THIS WEEK: Take one concrete step toward your Long Grief Alliance.',
If you have been thinking about finding a year-two grief group,',

spend fifteen minutes researching options.',
If you have considered therapy, make one call.',
You are not being needy. You are being strategic.',
Depth Navigators understand that sustainable support',
is built intentionally, not hoped for accidentally.'.

Day Thirty

Thirty days from now, if you practise this method consistently, here is what will be different: you will still be grieving. Let that be crystal clear. Your person will still be gone, and that will still hurt. But you will understand your grief instead of being terrorised by it. You will know the difference between a passing Surface Signal and a Deep Signal that needs serious support. You will have language for what is happening inside you, which means you will be able to communicate your needs instead of suffering in confused silence. You will have set at least a few boundaries and have language ready for the next person who implies you should be 'over it' by now. You will have reached out for support multiple times, which means you are rebuilding trust that help is possible even in year two. Most importantly, you will have evidence that you can navigate these depths. Not perfectly. Not without pain. But with skill and self-compassion.

Chapter 14

Becoming the Depth Navigator

Navigating the depths until you are ready to rise

There is a name for who you are becoming. The Depth Navigator.

Not someone who has stopped grieving. Not someone who has met the cultural deadline or convinced everyone around them that they are fine. Someone who has stopped pretending to be at the surface when they are in the depths, and who has built the tools, language, rituals, and community to live honestly in the deep water year. Someone who knows how to read their own grief waters, send clear signals about where they are, claim their right to still be underwater, tend the relationship that death changed but did not end, and harbour in a community that normalises the long journey.

What the Depth Navigator Knows

The Depth Navigator knows that the Compassion Cliff is not a reflection of their worth or their healing—it is a predictable cultural pattern. They know that the second year is harder, not easier, and that this is not evidence of failure but of the shock dissolving and the permanent reality setting in. They know the difference between what they actually need and what would be convenient to need, because they have kept the Depth Log. They know who in their life can hold depth and who cannot, because they have sent the signals and watched who responded. They know they have rights in year two, because they have written their own.

The Depth Navigator also knows that the deep water year eventually leads somewhere. Not to a shore where grief ends—that shore does not exist. But to a different relationship with the depths—one where you are not being tossed by waves you cannot see, but navigating waters you have learned to read. One where you are not alone in the dark, but accompanied by a Long Grief Alliance that understands exactly where you are.

The Gift of Having Navigated

*Eventually, and you will know when, you will be able
to reach back and guide someone else who is*

struggling through their year two, feeling utterly alone because everyone around them has moved on. You will be the person who says: I see you, the depths are real, and here is how to navigate them.

That is the gift that comes from not pretending you are fine, from building honest practices instead of performing recovery. You do not just survive the deep water year. You develop a depth of understanding about grief, about human resilience, about the ongoing nature of love that you simply cannot gain any other way. And that understanding, eventually, becomes something you can give back.

Come Back to This

Return to this guide whenever the pressure intensifies and you need reminding. Return to the Depth Log when you have lost touch with your own grief reality again. Return to the Express step when your support has drifted and you need to send new signals. Return to the Grief Bill of Rights when the internal timeline is louder than usual. Return to the Tend practice when the continuing bond has gone untended. Return to the Harbor step when you have been navigating alone for too long. These waters require repeated navigation practice. The method is here whenever you need it.

Appendix

Depth Log — Seven-Day Record

Use this section for your first seven days of ruthlessly honest grief documentation. Each entry: the time and trigger, the intensity, what you actually needed, and what you did instead. After seven days, review for patterns.

Day 1

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 2

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 3

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 4

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 5

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 6

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Day 7

Time & trigger:

Intensity (Surface / Mid-depth / Deep):

What I actually needed:

What I did instead:

Grief Bill of Rights

Write your own Grief Bill of Rights here. Five to ten permission statements that directly counter the expectations—external or internal—you are carrying. Begin each one: ‘I give myself permission to...’ This is a living document. Return to it and add to it as your grief evolves.

1. I give myself permission to

2. I give myself permission to

3. I give myself permission to

4. I give myself permission to

5. I give myself permission to

6. I give myself permission to

7. I give myself permission to

8. I give myself permission to

9. I give myself permission to

10. I give myself permission to

Depth Signals Sent

Record the three Depth Signals you send this week. For each: who you sent it to, what you specifically asked for, and what happened when you did.

Signal 1

Who I sent it to:

What I specifically asked for:

What happened:

Signal 2

Who I sent it to:

What I specifically asked for:

What happened:

Signal 3

Who I sent it to:

What I specifically asked for:

What happened:

30-Day Depth Tracker

Track your daily Depth Navigator practice across thirty days. Each entry records your morning depth check, the signal level, the DEPTH step practised, and whether you reached out for support.

Week 1

Day 1: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 2: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 3: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 4: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 5: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 6: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 7: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Week 1: Biggest shift this week:

One boundary set or signal sent:

Week 2

Day 8: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 9: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 10: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 11: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 12: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 13: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 14: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Week 2: Biggest shift this week:

One boundary set or signal sent:

Week 3

Day 15: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 16: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 17: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 18: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 19: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 20: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 21: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Week 3: Biggest shift this week:

One boundary set or signal sent:

Week 4

Day 22: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 23: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 24: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N
Day 25: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Day 26: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Day 27: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Day 28: Depth check: Y/N Signal level: S/M/D DEPTH step: ____ Reached out: Y/N

Week 4: Biggest shift this week:

One boundary set or signal sent:

After 30 days: How has your relationship with your own grief changed? What does your Long Grief Alliance look like now? Write about what it means to navigate the deep water year with skill rather than drowning in silence.

THE DEPTH SIGNAL METHOD

How to Navigate Year Two of Grief When Everyone Thinks You Should Be Over It

Companion Guide to the Audio Program