



## Remembering your father

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**When your father dies you can be swamped by all sorts of mixed emotions** – you've lost his love and attention, perhaps the security, advice or moral support he gave, or his place in the family that was strong and dependable. You might feel vulnerable, alone and just miss his presence. His age, how he died, how he lived and your relationship with him will all affect the way you grieve.

**You might have some unfinished business** – things not said or done, conversations that you wished you'd had. This can lead to guilt, anger, anxiety and preoccupied thoughts. What could help is to let these feelings come to the surface, write about them in a letter to your Dad or tell your diary; let yourself have that conversation to clear the air and release your feelings.

**If you're young**, you may worry about how your Mum is going to cope, who will look after the family, who will be there for all those important events where you just need your Dad? You might think it's unfair and be angry at the world because this has happened or you might just want to be left alone and try to work out how you are going to handle this. Try to talk to an adult you trust about these things.

### From Nadia El-Awady's Blog:

"I'm learning it's not as easy as people make it seem to be. It doesn't matter how old you or your parents are when they die, their passing is one of the most difficult things in the world to deal with. And it seems that it doesn't matter what culture you come from, people tend to hold in their emotions while in front of others. People seem to think that they need to be strong for others. I know I've done this. I don't want my own children to know I'm in pain over the loss of their grandfather. I don't think they've seen me cry over his loss. If they are around and my father is brought up, I'll put on a strong face, and even a smile, and talk about him lovingly. But then I may need to rush to the bathroom to let go of the tears in private.

So does it get any easier six months on? Not really. Not for me. I had a couple of good months where I felt the pain was easing. Most significantly, I stopped thinking of my father as often as the dead man lying on the hospital bed all covered in white. That phase was one of the most difficult. Perhaps one or two months after his death I started getting the more normal images of my father when I thought of him: my father lying on his bed in his bedroom telling me stories, my father sitting in his favorite lazy-boy chair watching TV, my father telling one of his dirty jokes and laughing his great belly laugh. Although the weeping hadn't stopped, it became less frequent and less intense."

### Jennifer Anne Ryan, aged 15, wrote:

*It was the year 1977, the first day of September,  
For this is the day I'll always remember,  
The year the day I will never forget,  
And look upon it with sad regret.  
For this is the day my father died,  
It wasn't until years later that I cried,  
And when he died I was only five,  
I didn't understand the word survive,  
Survive he didn't . . . die he did,  
And when he died I was only a kid,  
Dead at thirty-eight years of age,  
My heart broke with anger and rage,  
Why did he die, why was it so?  
No one could tell me, they didn't know,  
They said 'The good die young. The bad live on.'  
If he was bad he wouldn't have gone,  
Ten years later and yet still I cry,  
I didn't get a chance to say good-bye,  
But in my mind you live on,  
My love for you is an everlasting bond,  
Although you were sick for many a year,  
Not once did you show me your dying fear.  
Even though you're gone to a different place,  
Never in my life shall I forget your face.*

**On Father's Day** you can remember Dad by doing an activity that he always enjoyed; taking a bit of quiet time alone and 'talking' to him; making his photo prominent at your family gathering and talking about what he meant to you; posting a message on a memorial website like [heavenaddress.com](http://heavenaddress.com) and inviting others to join in.

**Doris Zagdanski** is a leading figure in modern day grief and loss education. Her seminars are included in vocational qualifications in Allied Health, Counselling and Funeral Directing. Her books and free factsheets are available at [www.allaboutgrief.com](http://www.allaboutgrief.com)