

# CONTINUING BONDS: A MODERN TAKE ON GRIEF

Bereaved parents often describe maintaining continued bonds with their child as an important way to honor their child's legacy and connections. It's important to note that not all parents find comfort in the concept of continuing bonds or maintaining connections, and that's OK, too.

## What are continuing bonds?

- Continuing bonds is a concept in grief that acknowledges the common desire to maintain a connection with your child after death.
- Continuing bonds normalizes grief as a lifelong, everchanging process that will ebb and flow over time.
- This theory validates many parents' inclination to remain connected and bonded with their child.
- Sometimes, parents describe this as redefining their relationship with their child as it shifts over time, allowing for bonds to continue in varying ways throughout the parent's life.

## How do other parents continue bonds with their child?

Every parent has their own sense of how they remain connected with their child. It's important to note there are no 'wrong' ways to continue bonds, only what feels right for your relationship with your child. Your relationship with your child continues to be unique, individual and special.

## Is it possible that my relationship with my child will change over time?

From what we hear from other parents, the connection with your child will change. Just as you change and grow, so will your relationships. It's natural and expected that how you continue bonding with your child will morph over time.

## What if this concept doesn't resonate with me in my grief experience?

That's OK! Grief is a highly individual process and there's no "right" way to experience or cope. You may find that continuing bonds doesn't resonate with you now, but may feel helpful in the future. Regardless, there's no pressure to continue bonds with your child in any 1 way.

## What are ways to continue bonds with my child?

Every family member may have their own personal or private relationship with your child, which may evolve over time.

Some families turn to rituals as a place to begin when exploring their relationship with their child. Importantly, there's not a 'right' or a 'wrong' way to continue bonds with your child. These are a few suggestions from other families that may offer a place to begin.

- Talk to them. It's OK to speak with your child, either out loud or in your mind.
- Write letters to your child. Journaling can be a powerful tool to connecting with your child.
- Share stories about your child with family, friends or new acquaintances.
- Plant a tree or garden with annual flowers.
- Adopt a hobby your child enjoyed.
- Visit comforting places and spaces your child loved.
- Look at photographs or complete an art project in their honor.
- Consider a personal ritual you had with them. For example, wishing your child 'good morning' and 'good night'.
- Tend to your child's grave (cleaning up leaves, planting flowers, painting stones).
- Enjoy a meal or snack your child loved.

**"Death ends a life, not a *relationship*."**

– Morrie Schwartz, *Tuesdays with Morrie*