

# Legacy Tips & Tools

## Legacies of Life Lessons through Loss

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Most life lessons we learn and can preserve as legacies for our loved ones are the result of losses we experience.

From the original loss of unity in the womb through birth, we face loss at every stage of development. Most of the time we think of loss as the death of a loved person, but all transitions, all change, include both loss and potential growth. Some common personal transitions include becoming mothers and grandmothers, marriage and divorce, the loss of life dreams, changing jobs and retirement, illness and aging. We are also shaped by encounters with others and external events in our world.

Just this week I was privileged to meet a woman whose presence and story taught me a practical and sacred lesson. As she told me about the loss of her daughter, she shared that she had learned to ask questions that both sustained her permanent grief and propelled her forward toward living her life purpose. Rather than asking “why” this accident, “why” this loss, she eventually used the result, the death of her beloved daughter Jennifer, to ask about the potential lesson, how she could live, and what she could learn. How profound!

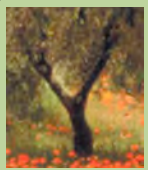
Here is a similar message in a powerful prayer/poem by Norman Hirsch:

Once or twice in a lifetime,  
a man or woman may choose  
a radical leaving, having heard  
Lech L'cha\* - Go forth.

God disturbs us toward our destiny  
by hard events and by freedom's now urgent voice  
which explode and confirm who we are.

We don't like leaving,  
but God loves becoming.

\*Lech l'cha is often translated from the Hebrew to mean “go forth toward (or to find) your self.”



### Reflection and Writing:

1. Begin by reflecting and journaling, for no more than 15 minutes each time you write, about some of your losses (I suggest that you start with small ones).
2. Choose one loss and write about a life lesson you learned from it.
3. Choose a recipient for a legacy letter: include your experience and the lesson you learned, expressed through a blessing (Again, write for no more than 15 minutes).
4. Return to your journal, and write for 5 minutes about your experience with this Tips & Tools reflection (I call this “Process Notes”).

Here is an example from my experience:

“It was 1962. I sat reading on a subway in Manhattan. A pregnant, homeless woman entered the car, and began to beg for money. I averted my eyes, buried my face in my book, and clasped my heart and my purse tightly. Silent minutes passed and suddenly the woman began to shout at the riders – crying out that it was okay if we didn't give her money, but it wasn't okay to avoid looking her in the face – that she was a human being! She picked up her bags and lurched through the door into the next train car.

“I was shocked and shamed. Since then, even if I choose not to give to a person begging, I look the person in the eye. I feel more human when I acknowledge another's humanity.”

“So, my beloved and precious children, Sid and Debbie, I offer you this blessing: ‘May you both be blessed with compassionate and wise eyes: eyes that see beyond the face of circumstance, that see the spark of the Divine deep within yourselves, each other, and everyone on our planet.’”

May your writing be blessed with learning, and may all your legacies be blessings,

*Rachael Freed*

[www.WomensLegacies.com](http://www.WomensLegacies.com)