

HOSPICE *of the* VALLEY  
*Bereavement Literature*

I TALK TO MY LOVED ONE AS IF SHE WERE THERE

You can have these one-sided conversations while you're alone, or even just in your mind, without speaking aloud at all . . . Shortly after her death; I told [my daughter] that I didn't want to live in a world without her. Yet from deep inside myself I had to admit that I did not live in a world without her - I simply could no longer see her. Certainly love remained. Love never ends. Nor had our relationship ended. She will forever be a part of me, and I of her.

Sometime later I again told her that I didn't want to live because living without her was the hardest thing I'd ever had to face. But again, from deep inside me, I had to admit that I was not living without her. She smiles at me from photographs, my heart sings when I relive snippets of private conversations with her or remember shared laughter and shopping expeditions and vacations, or recall joyous family gatherings in which she always played such a vital part. Additionally, several of her friends have become my friends, and so I have come to know them as she knew them, and they give back a small part of her as well as a part of themselves. I've embraced some of her interests and find myself, in a very real and deep sense, sharing myself with her in those endeavors. So my life continues in spite of myself.

Recently I told her I'm still not crazy about living in this world, which remains as different from my world of six years ago as noon from midnight. But I also tell her that I'm learning to find my way, learning to appreciate each new day for the opportunities it brings, learning to rejoice in all the new discoveries I made about the endurance and depth of unconditional love. My progress has been snailishly slow but steady.

I tell her often that I love her, too. I doubt that I shall ever give up these one-sided conversations. They allow me to involve my daughter in this new world of mine. What's more, I don't feel the least apologetic about it. This practice has been one of several techniques that have helped me to keep my sanity and to re-enter the world with some enthusiasm . . .

– Shirley Ottman, in *When Grief is New*