

HOSPICE *of the* VALLEY  
*Bereavement Literature*

## WHO AM I NOW?

Much of the emotional distress during the early stages of grief results from an identity crisis. Throughout married life we develop an identity blended with our mate's. To be successful in marriage each partner willingly gives up part of his or her individual identity, and in many ways marriage defines who we are. The loss of a spouse can cloud a person's identity to the point of asking, "Who am I now?"

As surviving spouses, we know we are not the same person we were before we married. In many ways we still feel married. Yet the death of our spouse makes us someone other than who we were during our marriage. The stress associated with the loss and the disassociation is magnified by the fear of the unknown future.

The search for and the development of a new identity is, in large part, what moving through grief and into living again is all about.

-William Wallace, in *Living Again: A Personal Journey for Surviving the Loss of a Spouse*