

Eight tips to help bereaved partners move on at home

Part 2

“Everywhere I look, I see a life we built together.”

I am on the phone with Bob Glockler, a recent widower. Like many who have lost a mate, he has a foot in two worlds: He wants to preserve and honor the memories of his late wife, yet also move forward to make the most of the rest of his life. He is 83.

“I suppose eventually I will look for some companionship,” he told me. “Whether we’re just friends, or move in together, or wind up getting married, who knows? Although I haven’t given it much thought, and it’s not something on the calendar, it’s not unlikely.”

Such is the push-pull of loss — and the struggle to find the way, any way, forward.

Now I know this topic will make some of you want to jump to the sports section, but hang with me a minute, because this is a fact: If you are coupled up and bonded till death do you part, you have a 50-50 chance that this will happen to you, and you’re going to want these pointers. I don’t care how young you think you are.

In last week’s column, I offered Glockler suggestions for how to transition his home from “ours” to “mine,” tackling specific areas, such as their bedroom and her closet. This week, I consulted a professional organizer and senior move manager from Boston for tips on how bereaved partners can sensitively and practically disperse their late mate’s belongings.

Nancy Patsios, 61, lost her husband to cancer 18 months ago, so also brings her first-hand perspective along when working with clients to sort through a lifetime of memories.

“It always startles me how different the process is for every-one,” she said.



AT HOME WITH
Marni Jameson

As we chatted, we came up with the following guidelines for those who’ve loved and lost:

- **Don’t try to meet anyone’s expectations for grief.** It has no timetable. The pace and manner in which individuals grieve is varied and personal.

Only surviving partners know when they are ready to make changes in the home, Patsios said. “Some feel paralyzed, while others need to do tangible tasks to help them cope.”

Don’t push the process, but try not to wallow, either.

- **Expect foggy thinking.** “The brain fog is real,” said Patsios. “I could have stared out the window for hours without a thought in my head.”

Don’t make any big decisions, including whether to move, too quickly.

- **Start with the easy stuff.** When you’re ready, begin by getting rid of items you don’t need, love or use that slant toward the partner.

For Patsios, that was easy. Her husband worked in property management and often brought

home gently used furniture. “We did not share that enthusiasm,” she said. “It was easy for me to get rid of what I didn’t want in the first place.”

He also had lots of tools. “I don’t need seven hammers. I kept one.”

Save highly personal items, like clothes and jewelry, for last.

- **View your décor through a new lens.** I have often said that homes should reflect the lives of those who live there. They don’t need to reflect those who once lived there. While the desire to

honor a lost loved one is normal, clinging to all their belongings is not the best way to do that.

In Glockler’s case, I suggested he try to make his home more gender neutral by removing the feminine touches, like the crocheted doilies and floral pillows his wife had sprinkled around the house.

- **Consider your visitors.** How do you want guests to feel when they come over? A home that is a

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