

WHAT HELPED ME IN EARLY GRIEF

Every grief journey is unique. What helped me may not be what helps you, but I want to share some of the practices and supports that made a difference in my earliest days after losing William. These are not in any particular order, and they are not a prescription—just a framework you can borrow from as you find your own way.

EMDR Therapy: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing helped me cope with the most traumatic flashbacks. It didn't erase what happened, but it softened the intensity so I could begin to breathe again.

Family Therapy: Grief affects the whole family, not just the individual. Sitting down together with a therapist gave us a safe place to speak, cry, and learn how to support each other.

Individual Therapy: I also needed space to process my feelings apart from my husband and surviving child. Having my own therapist meant I could be completely honest without worrying about protecting anyone else.

Trying Something New: I chose activities that had nothing to do with grief—like a writing class and joining our community chorus. I had never done either before, and the act of learning new skills gave my brain a break. For a little while, I was just a person learning notes or building a character—not only a bereaved mom.

Walking Every Day: No matter the weather, I walked. The bilateral movement of walking is powerful for trauma healing, and being in nature gave me space to think, cry, and simply take one step at a time.

Attending a Grief Retreat: Taking four days away with other grieving women gave me tools, companionship, and a sense that I wasn't alone. It was one of the first times I felt understood without needing to explain.

Joining a Peer Support Group: Meeting other people who had lost children was transformative. Seeing parents further along in their grief offered a glimpse of hope—I could survive this too.

Getting Away as a Family: We traveled, just the three of us, to rest and create new memories. Getting away from the daily reminders of home gave us space to figure out who we were after loss.

There is no cure for grief. But these small and big things gave me footing in a world that felt impossible. My hope is that one or two might spark an idea for you—that you'll find your own ways to survive, to remember, and eventually, to live again.