

CREATING MY MEMORY BOX

A widow's journey

Carrie's 50-year-old husband Robin
Died from a ruptured aneurysm in 2011

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His box is a celebration of life

I did not do much with anything of Robin's for a little while. I then packed up some of his clothes so I could use his dresser.

About six months later, I gave a few things away to a homeless man I knew, some to my son, and I gave Robin's wool coat to his best friend. I packed the rest of his closet into a box.

**It took about three years to
really go through the clothes.
I kept one whole box.**

As far as the trinkets and such, I put them on the first shelf of Robin's armoire, little things I wanted to have as keepsakes like the receipt from our last take-out, his last few cigarette butts, his last pack of cigarettes, lighter, watch, wallet, etc.

After about four and a half years, I bought a pretty box from the craft store and put everything in there. It's my memory box. It still fits on the top shelf of his armoire but now it's purposefully put away.

I didn't include anything from the memorial—I put that stuff in a space next to it. The box is a celebration of his life and the things he had when he died.

No one ever told me what to do. I just did it when it felt right, when I was ready. I didn't feel like I had to do anything. I was asked by a woman whose dad passed why her mom would want to immediately go through clothes and give them away. She felt it was wrong. I gently reminded her that this was her mom's grief journey and if it felt better to not see clothes, that it was painful to open a closet and see clothes, this is what she should do. I suggested she take a few articles if that would make her feel better.

As a new widow, I think whatever makes us feel comfortable is what we should do. Sometimes it is comfortable to have things just the way they are, and sometimes it is too painful to see clothes, and belongings every day. It is a journey that has no rules and the only person who should make those decisions are the grieving. I have two or three articles of clothing, like his favorite jean shirt that I actually wear. I find extreme comfort in doing so.