



Our Lady
of Peace

HOSPICE & HOME HEALTH CARE

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR HOUSE AFTER YOUR SPOUSE DIES

Our Lady of Peace Education Series

What makes a house a home? It's not the finishings or the furnishings, it's the people who live there, and the love they share. So, what happens when your husband, wife, or partner passes away, and you're left alone to decide what to do next? Should you stay, or should you go? It's no easy decision, but it's yours to make.

Staying in place for a year seems to be the common recommendation from therapists, friends, and family members, but it may or may not be the right choice for you. It wasn't right for Debbie Flick whose husband died suddenly in 2018. She found herself feeling out of place in the home she loved because the man she loved was no

longer there. "Gene and I had built the house together, but I couldn't feel his presence, just his absence," she explained. "I rented a condo, and listed the house, knowing I could turn down an offer, if I decided to go back. I never went back."

It's your decision

Debbie says the decision to stay or go is extremely personal. People deal with loss in different ways, and what's right for one person isn't right for another. "I still had the cabin that Gene loved, and his spirit remains there," she says. "And after a few months in the condo, I missed living in a house, so I bought one that was for sale next door to my sister, and it's the right place for me."

Ruth Markowitz, who leads the OLP support group for spouses, taught Debbie that with grief, there are no rules or answers that are right for everyone. There are simply things you do to give yourself comfort. Grief is personal, and you need to do what's best for you. Now, as Debbie provides support to other grieving spouses within the group, she echoes Ruth's teaching. "From staying or leaving the house to getting rid of your partner's belongings, go with your heart, and do what is best for you," she says. "I spent four months looking for someone



Gene and Debbie Flick

who was no longer there. I'm always going to feel the loss, and since Gene was no longer in the house, I no longer needed it. I chose to hold on to memories of the fun we had together instead."

Be sure before making a move

Debbie encourages people to not do a thing until you're clear on what you want to do. "Even if it ends up being the right decision, you'll open yourself up for regret," she says. "I didn't know what to do with Gene's belongings, so I kept them. My family moved everything to the new house without me, and it felt good." She adds, "It's not about the brick and mortar, it's about what's happening in your heart. I feel Gene's presence in my new home."

Debbie says Our Lady of Peace is her port in the storm and has been since her dad passed away in our care. "Until you've walked in the shoes, you can't totally understand what this means."



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We're here for you.

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