

Grief doesn't knock. It just shows up.

My mom's dad died by suicide. I was younger—old enough to know something was wrong, but not old enough to really understand why the house felt so heavy. No one explained it in full at the time. But even then, I could feel the shift. Grief does that. It doesn't just impact the person who's grieving, it changes the entire atmosphere of a home. Silence gets louder. Conversations get weird. You start tiptoeing around feelings. It felt like everyone was holding their breath, hoping time would just smooth it all out. But time doesn't heal everything; it just adds distance. The grief didn't leave. It settled in. It made itself a room in our house and unpacked. And slowly, without realizing it, we started adjusting our lives around it.

I chose the words Reflect, Re-adjust, and Support, because that's how grief moved through our family. It wasn't linear or poetic. It was messy. It was honest. And it's still ongoing.

Reflect

Reflection wasn't always intentional. Sometimes it showed up in the quiet moments—like when I'd see my mom staring into space while folding laundry. Or in the way she'd talk about her dad with half a smile and eyes that drifted elsewhere. I got to know my grandfather through her grief. Through old stories, photo albums, and moments where she'd casually drop a memory like, "He used to say that exact thing." Reflection meant listening, even when it was uncomfortable. I started noticing how often people avoid the topic of suicide when it came up, or how the silence around mental health creates this space where no one knows how to speak without breaking something. We weren't equipped with the words for it; so reflection became about finding them.

I also reflected on the way our family didn't talk about mental health before this. How death, even more so, suicide was wrapped in shame. Reflecting meant confronting all of that. It wasn't just about remembering him, but about acknowledging what we never had the tools to talk about while he was still alive. It wasn't always deep or dramatic. Sometimes reflection came through laughter... at a dumb joke he once told or a way he once spoke. Those were the moments where grief softened and turned into something a little closer to love.

Re-adjust

Grief forced us to re-adjust our dynamics, our routines, and our emotional vocabulary. My mom started talking more openly about how she felt. I learned that it's okay to say "I don't know what I'm feeling, but it's heavy." We didn't try to go back to "normal," because normal didn't exist anymore. Re adjusting meant learning how to exist around the absence. It's wild how someone can be gone, and yet their presence is still everywhere. On a birthday, at a dinner, in a song on the radio. You don't move on, you just move differently. You adapt. You re-adjust.

We also had to learn how to be gentle with each other. There were days where the air just felt off, where one of us would get snappy or quiet, but instead of brushing it off, we'd start checking in. I know I did this with my Mom. It wasn't perfect, but it was real. Re-adjusting also meant making space for new ways to honour him. Some holidays we'd do something he loved, like eating at his favourite restaurant. It was all about accepting that okay looks different now. Sometimes that looked like my Mom crying at the dinner table. Sometimes, it looked like lighting a candle or giving a toast. We stopped trying to make grief disappear and instead tried to make space for it. And somehow, that made it less scary.

Support

This part is everything. And it came in forms I didn't expect. It was friends who sat with me in silence. It was a teacher who pulled me aside after class just to check in. But most of all, it was my family starting to show up for each other in ways we hadn't before. Support didn't really mean saying the *right* thing exactly. In fact, it usually didn't. It was more about being there; even when there was nothing to say. That presence, that consistency, meant more than any advice ever could. There's something powerful in being seen during grief. It makes you feel less alone, less lost. That's why I think services like Lighthouse for Grieving Children truly matter. Lighthouse gives kids and teens a place to talk, cry, and just be without needing to "fix" anything. I think that's critically important in the grieving process. It also gives them space to say things admitting their anger or their numbness. Like, "I miss them but I also feel guilty,". Those messy, contradictory feelings don't need to be cleaned up, and that's the biggest lesson I've learned watching my Mom and the family go through this. Everything is just part of the process and there is no right or wrong way of doing it.

Grief doesn't go away... it changes. And Lighthouse helps people grow around it. They help you hold the weight instead of hiding it. That kind of support is rare. It's *life-saving*.

Final Thoughts

Grief still lives in our house. It doesn't dominate the space like it used to, but it lingers in a photo, or a memory, or a song. And that's okay.

Losing someone to suicide taught me more about love, silence, and healing than any textbook ever could. I'm still learning. Still grieving. Still reflecting, re-adjusting, and supporting. It feels like a wave that knocks the wind out of you. Other times, it's just a simple whisper in the

background. But it's always there, in some form. I used to think healing meant "getting over it,"

Now, I think it just means learning how to live with it—without letting it break you.

And maybe even letting it soften you.