Self-doubt and Second Guessing   written by Sara Olmsted, Bereavement Intern

When we lose someone we love, we face our grief journey, which can take many roads. We may search for closure, but it will not come—at least not in the way we can achieve closure with a business transaction or a disagreement with a friend. The realization that there is no closure in losing a loved one may feel like a burden, but it also may feel like a relief. Why would we want to shut the door on someone that meant so much to us, just because they are no longer living? Grieving zaps much energy from us and, at times, we can feel very conflicted. Although the pain we feel may seem like it will never leave us, it can often transform us, when it is time, if we open our hearts to our new reality. We can heal from a loss, and we carry our loved ones with us for the rest of our lives.

A feeling of things being unresolved often comes upon us when someone we love dies. This person is no longer living and we do not have direct access to them in order to get the answers we are searching for. Guilt is a common emotional reaction when grieving, often resulting from the fact that we cannot change what has come and gone. You may be asking yourself: Why didn't I tell my loved one how much they meant to me? Could I have prevented discomfort when my loved one was in pain? Is there more that I need to be doing for my loved one now that they have died? Should I have made different choices for my loved one and would it have changed where things are at now? This is a normal process when grieving. It is draining, but it speaks to the love and concern you felt for your loved one.

Processing the guilt you feel may allow some of the heaviness to be lifted. You might find it helpful to do this with a trusted friend, clergy, or a bereavement counselor. Remaining present and acknowledging that you did the best you could with the circumstances at hand is a step in the right direction. When we hold on to something we have no control over, we are not allowing ourselves the gentleness we need while grieving.