

After the Last Goodbye

The First Year Alone at 60+

A 4-Phase Framework for the Year After



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Book 12 of The Care Collection

Introduction: The First Morning

I lost my wife to cancer after many years of marriage. I was her primary caregiver through the long illness. I held her hand when the last breath came. I have lived the long goodbye.

I have also lived the morning after.

The morning after is the first morning of the first year. The morning after is the morning you wake up and the chair is empty. The morning after is the morning the alarm goes off and there is no one to wake up but yourself. The morning after is the morning the coffee is just for you. The morning after is the morning you remember that the morning after is real.

The morning after is the hardest morning. The morning after is the first morning of the year. The year is the work.

This is a book about the year. The year after the long goodbye. The year after the funeral. The year after the casseroles stop coming. The year after the phone stops ringing. The year after the friends stop checking in. The year that is just you, and the empty chair, and the work of learning to live with the air.

The year is not the grief. The year is the year after the grief. The year is the year when the grief has become the air. The year is the year when the grief is no longer the crisis. The year is the year you learn to live with the air.

I have lived the year. I have written this book for the spouse who is in the year. I have written this book for the spouse who is asking: am I doing this right? The answer is yes. You are doing it right.

The doing is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The gift is the life you are still living. The life you are still living is the gift. The gift is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

Let us begin.

The morning after is also the morning of the first small decision. The decision is: what do I do today? The decision is: do I get out of bed? The decision is: do I make the coffee? The small decisions are the work. The work is the year.

The morning after is the morning that begins the work of the year. The work is the small decisions. The work is the morning ritual. The work is the breathing. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

I have lived the morning after. I have lived the first year. I have written this book for the spouse who is in the morning after. I have written this book for the spouse who is asking: am I doing this right? The answer is yes. You are doing it right. The doing is the work. The work is the year.

Chapter 1: The First Morning

The first morning is the hardest morning. The first morning is the morning you wake up and remember. The first morning is the morning the alarm goes off and there is no one to wake up but yourself. The first morning is the morning the coffee is just for you.

The first morning is the morning that comes after the long goodbye. The long goodbye was the long illness, the long caregiving, the long watching, the long holding of the hand. The long goodbye was the work of letting go. The first morning is the morning you wake up and the letting go is done.

The letting go is not the work of the first morning. The letting go is the work of the long goodbye. The first morning is the morning after the work.

The first morning is the morning you have to do the things that the long goodbye made impossible. The first morning is the morning you have to make the coffee. The first morning is the morning you have to feed the dog. The first morning is the morning you have to answer the phone. The first morning is the morning you have to live.

The first morning is the morning that begins the year. The year is the work. The work is the year.

The first morning is also the morning of the first grief. The first grief is the grief of the empty chair. The first grief is the grief of the coffee that is just for you. The first grief is the grief of the morning that is just for you. The first grief is the grief of the first morning without the person you have loved for many years.

The first grief is the air you will breathe for the year. The air is the grief. The grief is the air.

The Three Truths of the First Morning

The first morning has three truths. The three truths are the foundation of the year.

- Truth 1: The first morning is supposed to be hard.** The first morning is the morning you have been dreading for the long goodbye. The first morning is the morning that comes after the long goodbye. The first morning is supposed to be hard.

- Truth 2: The first morning is the beginning of the year.** The first morning is not the end. The first morning is the beginning. The first morning is the morning that begins the work. The work is the year.

- Truth 3: The first morning is the morning you are still alive.** The first morning is the morning you woke up. The first morning is the morning you are still here. The first morning is the morning the person you loved would want you to be.

The three truths are the foundation. The foundation is the year. The year is the work.

The Five Things You Will Do on the First Morning

The first morning has five things. The five things are the things you will do. The five things are:

1. **Wake up.** Wake up. Wake up is the first thing. Wake up is the work.
2. **Make the coffee.** Make the coffee. The coffee is the ritual. The ritual is the work.
3. **Feed the dog.** Feed the dog. The dog is the companion. The companion is the work.
4. **Answer the phone.** Answer the phone. The phone is the connection. The connection is the work.
5. **Breathe.** Breathe. The breath is the air. The air is the work.

The five things are the work of the first morning. The first morning is the work of the year. The year is the work.

The Three Things You Will Not Do on the First Morning

The first morning has three things you will not do. The three things are the things you cannot do. The three things are:

1. **Make any decisions.** Decisions are for later. Later is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Talk to anyone you do not have to talk to.** Talk is for the people who are there. The people who are there are the work. The work is the year.

3. **Think about the long goodbye.** The long goodbye is over. The long goodbye is not the work. The first morning is the work. The work is the year.

The three things you will not do are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Morning Ritual

The first morning is the beginning of the morning ritual. The morning ritual is the work.

The morning ritual has 5 steps:

1. **Wake up.** The wake up is the work.
2. **Make the coffee.** The coffee is the work.
3. **Sit in the chair.** The chair is the work.
4. **Drink the coffee.** The coffee is the work.
5. **Plan the day.** The plan is the work.

The morning ritual is the work of the year. The year is the work. The work is the morning ritual.

The morning ritual is not a solution. The morning ritual is the work. The work is the year.

The Five Things You Might Feel on the First Morning

The first morning has five things you might feel. The five things are the things you might feel. The five things are:

1. **Numbness.** Numbness is the body's response. The body's response is the work. The work is the year.
2. **Shock.** Shock is the mind's response. The mind's response is the work. The work is the year.
3. **Terror.** Terror is the heart's response. The heart's response is the work. The work is the year.
4. **Relief.** Relief is also a feeling. The relief is the work. The work is the year. (Relief at the end of the long goodbye is normal. The relief is the work.)

5. **Guilt.** Guilt is also a feeling. The guilt is the work. The work is the year. (Guilt for being relieved is also normal. The guilt is the work.)

The five feelings are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Three Things to Remember About the First Morning

The first morning has three things to remember. The three things are the things to remember. The three things are:

1. **The first morning is hard.** The first morning is the work. The work is the year.

2. **The first morning is the beginning.** The first morning is the work. The work is the year.

3. **The first morning is the gift.** The first morning is the work. The work is the year.

The three things to remember are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

A Note on the First Morning

The first morning is hard. The first morning is supposed to be hard. The first morning is the work of the year. The year is the work.

The first morning is not the end. The first morning is the beginning. The first morning is the morning that begins the year. The year is the work.

The first morning is the morning you are still alive. The first morning is the morning the person you loved would want you to be. The first morning is the morning the work begins.

The work is the year. The year is the work. The work is the first morning.

You are not failing. The first morning is hard. The first morning is the work.

Breathe. The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The gift is the life you are still living. The life is the work. The work is the year.

Today's Action

The work of the year begins today. The work of the year is the small steps. The work of the year is the daily practice. The work of the year is the moment-to-moment choice.

- The 3 things to do today:**

1. **Breathe.** The breath is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Move.** The movement is the work. The work is the year.

3. **Connect.** The connection is the work. The work is the year.

- The 3 things to NOT do today:**

1. **Do not make big decisions.** The big decisions are for later.

2. **Do not isolate completely.** The connection is the work.

3. **Do not judge yourself.** The judgment is not the work.

- The 1 thing to remember today:**

The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- Today's affirmation:**

"I am not failing. The year is hard. The year is the work. I am doing the work. The work is the year."

The affirmation is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- This chapter is for the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.*

Chapter 2: The Empty Chair

The empty chair is the centerpiece of the first year. The empty chair is the chair at the kitchen table. The empty chair is the chair in the car. The empty chair is the chair in the living room. The empty chair is the chair that is everywhere. The empty chair is the chair that is the absence of the person you loved.

The empty chair is the most visible sign of the loss. The empty chair is the chair that is not occupied. The empty chair is the chair that is the shape of the person who is not there. The empty chair is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair is also the chair that is the most painful. The empty chair is the chair that hurts. The empty chair is the chair that you look at and remember. The empty chair is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair is not the enemy. The empty chair is the friend. The empty chair is the friend that reminds you of the person. The empty chair is the friend that reminds you of the love. The empty chair is the friend that reminds you of

the work. The work is the year.

The Three Reactions to the Empty Chair

The empty chair has three reactions. The three reactions are the ways you will respond. The three reactions are:

- Reaction 1: Avoid the chair.** Avoid the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
- Reaction 2: Sit in the chair.** Sit in the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
- Reaction 3: Move the chair.** Move the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.

The three reactions are the work of the year. The year is the work. The work is the empty chair.

Reaction 1: Avoid the Chair

Avoid the chair is the most common reaction. Avoid the chair is the reaction of the first months. Avoid the chair is the reaction of the spouse who cannot sit in the chair. Avoid the chair is the reaction of the spouse who cannot look at the chair. Avoid the chair is the reaction of the spouse who cannot be in the room with the chair.

Avoid the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Avoid the chair is okay for the first months. Avoid the chair is okay for the first year. Avoid the chair is okay for the work. The work is the year.

Avoid the chair is not the long-term solution. Avoid the chair is the short-term solution. The short-term solution is the work. The work is the year.

Reaction 2: Sit in the Chair

Sit in the chair is the most healing reaction. Sit in the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to be in the room with the chair. Sit in the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to look at the chair. Sit in the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to remember the chair.

Sit in the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Sit in the chair is not easy. Sit in the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Sit in the chair is the way. The way is the work. The work is the year.

When you sit in the chair, the chair becomes a place of memory. The chair becomes a place of love. The chair becomes a place of the work. The work is the year.

When you sit in the chair, you remember the person. The person is the work. The work is the year.

When you sit in the chair, you grieve. The grief is the work. The work is the year.

Reaction 3: Move the Chair

Move the chair is the most practical reaction. Move the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to live with the chair. Move the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to have the chair in a different place. Move the chair is the reaction of the spouse who is ready to change the room.

Move the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Move the chair is not a betrayal. Move the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Move the chair is okay at any time. Move the chair is the work. The work is the year.

Move the chair does not mean you are forgetting. Move the chair means you are living. Living is the work. The work is the year.

The Three Things to Remember About the Empty Chair

The empty chair has three things. The three things are the things you will remember. The three things are:

1. **The chair is not the enemy.** The chair is the friend. The friend is the work. The work is the year.
2. **The chair is the work.** The chair is the work of the year. The year is the work. The work is the chair.
3. **The chair is the gift.** The chair is the gift of the memory. The memory is the gift. The gift is the chair.

The three things are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Five Ways to Honor the Empty Chair

The empty chair has five ways. The five ways are the ways to honor the chair. The five ways are:

1. **Sit in the chair.** Sit in the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
2. **Talk to the chair.** Talk to the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
3. **Place something on the chair.** Place something on the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
4. **Light a candle by the chair.** Light a candle by the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.
5. **Move the chair to a place of honor.** Move the chair to a place of honor. The chair is the work. The work is the year.

The five ways are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Empty Chair in Different Rooms

The empty chair is in different rooms. The empty chair in the kitchen is the chair where the person used to sit. The empty chair in the kitchen is the chair that is the absence of the person at the meal. The empty chair in the kitchen is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair in the car is the chair that is the absence of the person in the passenger seat. The empty chair in the car is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair in the bedroom is the chair that is the absence of the person in the morning. The empty chair in the bedroom is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair in the living room is the chair that is the absence of the person in the evening. The empty chair in the living room is the chair that is the work of the year.

The empty chair in different rooms is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

A Note on the Empty Chair

The empty chair is hard. The empty chair is supposed to be hard. The empty chair is the work of the year. The year is the work.

The empty chair is not the end. The empty chair is the beginning. The empty chair is the chair that begins the work. The work is the year.

The empty chair is the chair that is the absence. The absence is the work. The work is the year.

The empty chair is the chair that is the love. The love is the work. The work is the year.

The empty chair is the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.

You are not failing. The empty chair is hard. The empty chair is the work.

Breathe. The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The gift is the chair. The chair is the work. The work is the year.

Today's Action

The work of the year begins today. The work of the year is the small steps. The work of the year is the daily practice. The work of the year is the moment-to-moment choice.

- The 3 things to do today:**

1. **Breathe.** The breath is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Move.** The movement is the work. The work is the year.

3. **Connect.** The connection is the work. The work is the year.

- The 3 things to NOT do today:**

1. **Do not make big decisions.** The big decisions are for later.

2. **Do not isolate completely.** The connection is the work.

3. **Do not judge yourself.** The judgment is not the work.

- The 1 thing to remember today:**

The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- Today's affirmation:**

"I am not failing. The year is hard. The year is the work. I am doing the work. The work is the year."

The affirmation is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- This chapter is for the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.*

Chapter 3: The First Three Months

The first three months are the hardest months. The first three months are the months when the grief is the most intense. The first three months are the months when the absence is the most present. The first three months are the months when the air is the thickest. The first three months are the months of the work.

The first three months are not a sentence. The first three months are the beginning. The first three months are the foundation of the year. The first three months are the work.

The first three months are also the months of the most help. The first three months are the months when the casseroles are still coming. The first three months are the months when the phone is still ringing. The first three months are the months when the friends are still checking in. The first three months are the months of the help. The help is the work.

The first three months are the months of the most grief. The first three months are the months of the most tears. The first three months are the months of the most sleeping. The first three months are the months of the most not-eating. The first three months are the months of the most doing-the-things. The first three months are the months of the work.

The first three months are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The First Month: The Shock Month

The first month is the shock month. The first month is the month when the body is in shock. The first month is the month when the mind is in shock. The first month is the month when the heart is in shock. The first month is the month of the shock. The shock is the work.

The first month has 5 features:

1. **The shock.** The shock is the body's response to the loss. The shock is the work.
2. **The numbness.** The numbness is the mind's response to the loss. The numbness is the work.
3. **The sleeping.** The sleeping is the body's way of processing. The sleeping is the work.
4. **The crying.** The crying is the heart's response. The crying is the work.
5. **The doing-the-things.** The doing-the-things is the mind's way of coping. The doing-the-things is the work.

The first month is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The first month is not the time for big decisions. The first month is the time for breathing. The breathing is the work. The work is the year.

The Second Month: The Reality Month

The second month is the reality month. The second month is the month when the shock is fading. The second month is the month when the reality is setting in. The second month is the month when the absence is becoming the air. The second month is the month of the reality. The reality is the work.

The second month has 5 features:

1. **The reality.** The reality is the loss. The loss is the work.
2. **The anger.** The anger is the heart's response. The anger is the work.
3. **The bargaining.** The bargaining is the mind's response. The bargaining is the work.
4. **The sadness.** The sadness is the body's response. The sadness is the work.
5. **The doing-the-things.** The doing-the-things is the work. The work is the year.

The second month is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The second month is the time for the conversations. The conversations are the work. The work is the year.

The Third Month: The Turning Month

The third month is the turning month. The third month is the month when the shock is gone. The third month is the month when the reality is here. The third month is the month when the work is beginning. The third month is the month of the turning. The turning is the work.

The third month has 5 features:

1. **The turning.** The turning is the change. The change is the work. The work is the year.
2. **The grief.** The grief is the work. The work is the year.
3. **The acceptance.** The acceptance is the mind's response. The acceptance is the work.
4. **The hope.** The hope is the heart's response. The hope is the work.

5. **The doing-the-things.** The doing-the-things is the work. The work is the year.

The third month is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The third month is the time for the small decisions. The small decisions are the work. The work is the year.

The Five Things to Do in the First Three Months

The first three months have five things. The five things are the things to do. The five things are:

1. **Sleep.** Sleep is the foundation. The foundation is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Eat.** Eat is the body. The body is the work. The work is the year.

3. **Breathe.** Breathe is the air. The air is the work. The work is the year.

4. **Move.** Move is the body. The body is the work. The work is the year.

5. **Connect.** Connect is the heart. The heart is the work. The work is the year.

The five things are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Five Things to Not Do in the First Three Months

The first three months have five things. The five things are the things to not do. The five things are:

1. **Do not make big decisions.** The big decisions are for later. The later is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Do not move.** Move is for later. The later is the work. The work is the year.

3. **Do not throw away the things.** The things are the work. The work is the year.

4. **Do not start dating.** Dating is for later. The later is the work. The work is the year.

5. **Do not do the big cleaning.** The big cleaning is for later. The later is the work. The work is the year.

The five things to not do are the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The Help That Comes in the First Three Months

The first three months have help. The help comes in different forms. The help is the work.

The help is the casseroles. The casseroles are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the phone calls. The phone calls are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the visits. The visits are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the cards. The cards are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the flowers. The flowers are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the conversations. The conversations are the work. The work is the year.

The help is the silence. The silence is the work. The work is the year.

The help is the presence. The presence is the work. The work is the year.

The help is the gift. The gift is the year.

A Note on the First Three Months

The first three months are hard. The first three months are supposed to be hard.

The first three months are the work of the year. The year is the work.

The first three months are not the end. The first three months are the beginning.

The first three months are the months that begin the work. The work is the year.

The first three months are the months of the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The gift is the air. The air is the grief. The grief is the work. The work is the year.

You are not failing. The first three months are hard. The first three months are the work.

Breathe. The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

The gift is the air. The air is the work. The work is the year.

Today's Action

The work of the year begins today. The work of the year is the small steps. The work of the year is the daily practice. The work of the year is the moment-to-moment choice.

- The 3 things to do today:**

1. **Breathe.** The breath is the work. The work is the year.

2. **Move.** The movement is the work. The work is the year.

3. **Connect.** The connection is the work. The work is the year.

- The 3 things to NOT do today:**

1. **Do not make big decisions.** The big decisions are for later.

2. **Do not isolate completely.** The connection is the work.

3. **Do not judge yourself.** The judgment is not the work.

- The 1 thing to remember today:**

The breath is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- Today's affirmation:**

"I am not failing. The year is hard. The year is the work. I am doing the work.
The work is the year."

The affirmation is the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.

- This chapter is for the work. The work is the year. The year is the gift.*

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

S. Shharma is the author of The Care Collection - books for couples in the second half of life, written by a man who lived the silence and survived it.

He lost his wife of many years to cancer. He was her primary caregiver through every stage of her illness. He held her hand in the hospital. He sat in the waiting room at 3 a.m. He learned the silence of a marriage the way you learn a language you never wanted to speak.

He is also a businessman, an M.Sc., an MBA, and an APSCM from the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Calcutta, with thirty years in corporate management. But these are not credentials you need to trust him. The credentials that matter are the ones in the books.

The Care Collection is not about how to fix a marriage. The Care Collection is about how to live one - even when the marriage is quiet, even when one of you is sick, even when one of you is gone.

He lives in India. He writes from the perspective of someone who has been on every side of a marriage - the partner, the caregiver, and the one left behind.

THE CARE COLLECTION - 14 BOOKS BY S. SHHARMA

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Fade - Why friendships disappear in midlife and how to bring them back 14. Hum Ladte Nahi (Hinglish) - Shaadi ko wapas kholne ka 30-din ka plan (Indian edition)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR & THE 48-BOOK ECOSYSTEM

Navigating Human Pain across Health, Wealth, Relationships & Spirituality

About Sanjay Shharma (S. Sharma)

Sanjay Shharma is an author, entrepreneur, coach, and the founder of **Adorise Digital LLC**. Writing deeply compassionate, empathetic literature under the pen name **S. Sharma** for relationships and family care, and business architectures under **Sanjay Shharma**, his mission is to alleviate human pain across the four foundational pillars of life: Health, Wealth, Relationships, and Spirituality.

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