

SUCCESS STORIES

Do not stay too long in the sadness. “Even if it seems difficult, you always have to find one bright side”

Leena operated Leena's home farm together with her husband. There had been chickens on the farm until 1996, after that the farm continued as a crop farm. In addition, Leena was employed outside of the farm and her husband, Timo, had a forest machinery company. In the fall of 2005, the bank manager, upon seeing the couple, asked if the matters regarding final wills were in order. During the week of Christmas, a situation emerged when a mutual will was made. In January 2006, Timo died in an accident. Leena told us her story about how she had to manage to move forward in such a situation. Although Leena has had moments where she could have been bitter, she has considered it important that there must be some solace.



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Name of the interviewed	Leena
Type of farming activity	Crop farm
Mental health issue and affecting factors	Grief for loss

What is your story?

It was January 2006. She called Timo in the afternoon about shopping needs. After the call, Leena could no longer reach her husband by phone. Timo had a habit of not answering the phone while working, but this time Leena felt something was different. She decided to do one necessary work task right away, thinking that it would be done. As the afternoon and evening progressed, Leena called her husband without an answer. She went to sleep, but woke up at two in the morning to find that Timo still hadn't come home. Leena called Timo's subcontractor, who went to the forest to see what the situation was. After a while, she received a phone call: the worst possible thing had happened, Timo had died in an accident in the forest alone while repairing the forestry machine.

Leena took the car to the work site. The rescue service and the fire department were already on location. Since the site was not far from home, the first responders were local. At first, the responders tried to prevent Leena from going to see what had happened. However, Leena was convinced that if she did not see what had happened, she would never find peace. Another bystander let her in to see what had happened. Timo had been repairing the same part that he and Leena had also repaired the night before. The helpers instructed Leena to call a support person as soon as she got home. She called her friend, who got there. It was early morning.

Leena was widowed at the age of 44. Leena's parents lived in the same home as Leena, Leena's two sons were already adults at the time of the incident and lived away from home. Leena received support from her close circle. The home seemed to have turned into a cafe, run by Leena's good friends. People brought their condolences. Leena could not eat, she sat at the end of the table and followed the activities around her. In addition to grief, she had to take care of her own health, as a diabetic, loss of appetite is dangerous. Leena received instructions from her diabetes doctor and nurse on maintaining the sugar balance, as well as support on discussing the loss of a spouse. The support given around one's illness also supported the mental coping. Crisis support was offered and Leena went to talk to the nurse once. However, Leena found the support from her close friends and family to be more meaningful than crisis support.

Handling the situation

Before Timo's death, Leena had to face various losses. The fact that she had supported others in the moment of loss gave her strength to deal with the loss of her own spouse. The support network was also strong, the roles of the supported and the supporters alternated, now Leena received support and help.

Leena is grateful that her own family, her parents, her husband's siblings and parents, and friends were close to her. One of the husbands sisters slept in the same room with Leena during the time after the incident, the boys were at home and all were together. Facing the mourner was difficult for some, others avoided Leena and sometimes Leena supported the person who was grieving.

The severe frosts started after a week of Timo's death. A water tank in the barn started to leak. The neighboring farmer came to help fix it. The following week, the toilet shower broke. The dishwasher broke. In the moment, everything seemed a lot of extra and things to be taken care of piled up. All this made Leena think that she is still needed in this world. One just needs to get going, repair and get a new faucet and a new dishwasher. In addition to the grief, these things seemed really big in the moment. Furthermore, Leena's mother's memory began to deteriorate to the extent that she could no longer manage at home. Leena's father also moved to an apartment building closer to the place where Leena's mother was being treated. In July-August 2006, Leena was alone at home for the first time in her life. In the autumn of the same year, her father-in-law passed away. Leena had to give up many of her loved ones in a short time span.

Leena thought the best solution was to give up her new associational mission, which had started in the beginning of January. She also informed the other associations in which she was active that she would no longer manage the affairs for the associations. The associations convinced Leena to stay and lighten the workload. So Leena continued to work with the associations. The tasks remained, but she received more help.

Then spring came and the sowing had to be done. The most difficult moments were the first times when a machine was put into use. After that, the other times were already easier. The first summer was terrible.

The waste oats seemed to be everywhere. Leena went to tear them sometimes with the children, sometimes with the neighbor's. The burden felt unreasonable and at times it was annoying that why did this have to happen, why did Timo have to die. However, the will to live kept she going.

In the fall, Leena was just leaving for a trip abroad with her friend, when the inspector called her. An inspection time was arranged for a time after the trip. The inspection went well, but at that point she felt that it couldn't be true.

The biggest grief related to the matter are the thoughts that, for example, the grandchildren have not known their grandfather, that is a painful thing.

Leena has had many problems with her own health. She describes her character as positive. She has her loved ones and staying active as a coping mechanism. The farm's fields have been rented to another farmer since 2015. Leena had dancing as a hobby together with her husband. Leena kept that hobby even after Timo's death. Dancing also gave meaning to live. At the moment, the hobby of dancing continues with a close person, with whom Leena has been together for several years. Nature and water are important to Leena. The sound of the bubbling rapids next to the home gives her strength. Water as an element gives peace of mind.

Conclusion and tips

Leena had always thought that you should do the things you want in life, and not wait for the retirement. This idea became stronger after Timo's death. You can't wait in life if you want to do something. Leena plans ahead and considers it important. Plans and dreams became more realistic and concrete. The plans must also take into account one's own resources. You can do it in parts and you don't have to go to the extremes.

Tips to other farmers

“Even if it seems difficult, you always have to find one bright side”

Losing a spouse is a difficult situation. The spouse is never forgotten. One shouldn't worry about the situation for too long. One has to let go of the pain, the sadness and the longing, even though that person is always there in your memories. Leena thinks it's important that Timo is addressed by the name that everyone has addressed him by, be it Timo, father, daddy... The later you leave the naming, the harder it becomes to say it. In addition, you just have to find the bright side of things, no matter how difficult it is.

When planning and thinking about the future, it's natural that thoughts don't easily stop at what if the other one of us doesn't exist. Leena brings out how she speaks in favor of getting final wills and powers of attorney in order. It helps in the moment of loss. Talk about your wishes and how you will act if there is no one else. It is not necessary to talk about this often and all the time, but it is good to have a discussion about this topic as well.

We are tested in different ways during our lives. A tree that has never been in the wind will fall after growing too tall. A tree that has experienced the wind strengthens its roots and stays upright even in storms. The resilience of our mind and its development function in the same way. Leena's story shows the strength of resilience. Difficult experiences give us the capabilities and operating models for how we can survive and cope.

For some of us, there are moments in life when we are tested beyond measure. It is important to ask for help and let people close, even when it is difficult. And keep hope and plans alive. Plans don't always have to be big. A good plan can also be, for example, a small walk planned for the evening or a call to a friend. Make goals, big or small. Remember to break big goals into parts and consider your own resources. Seek support, from professionals or close people. Grief, but also let go of grief. We always have the memories.

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