



## An Adolescent's Spiritual Bill of Rights

1. I know that I am now going through a lot of losses besides the death of a loved one. Many changes are taking place in my life, my mind, my body. The pressures are overwhelming – living up to expectations at school, getting along with my friends, and finding some freedom for me while still dependent upon parents. I hardly know who I am. And now death!
2. **Please be patient with me. Time doesn't completely heal a broken heart it only allows me to live with it. After all, didn't take even God six days to create the world?**
3. Don't tell me "to be brave" or that "it's God's will" or that "everything will be alright." Strange, isn't it? We praise people for carrying our burdens quietly rather than urging us to express our sorrows. I can't heal from something I'm not given permission to feel.
4. **Don't suggest that God is punishing me because of things I should have done – like going to services more regularly or praying hard enough, or doing some things that you are not proud of. Isn't there enough pain without your inflicting additional guilt?**
5. Don't tell me that good people don't become angry. I am furious! Life just isn't fair. I even resent God for allowing this to happen. But didn't even Jesus challenge: "My god, why have you forsaken me?"
6. **I'm not always comfortable sharing my strong feelings with adults. After all, I'm not a kid anymore. Isn't it natural for adolescents to move away from parents and family toward their own friends? Sometimes your attempt to "draw me out" when I don't feel quite ready only leads me to become more, angry, distancing myself into further loneliness. But don't give up on me. Try at another, more appropriate time. When the mind is ready, the teacher may appear.**
7. You might recall with me some of the happy moments I shared with our loved one. Memories might be my rainbow on rainy days. Remembering can help turn bitter pain into happier thoughts. For the Bible says: "All that I loved is now part of me." AND it's okay even if I might talk the person's bad trait and my regrets.
8. **Include me in planning the religious ceremonies of death – the funeral, internment. If I choose, I might like to help in the arrangements, like choosing the casket, the prayers, the music or what my loved one should wear. Maybe I could write a poem. I especially need a hug.**
9. Allow for my changing thoughts. At times I might say: "When you die you're dead. Period. That's all there is." OR "I believe the soul is released after death to be with God." OR "I am convinced that someday my loved one and I will be together again in heaven." OR "I will wait and see." I need to keep the door open to doubts and questions. Respect my individuality, for in the long run I must find my own answers to the problems of both life and death
10. **I wish to help others who are also in need. Maybe I could become a member of a support group, a hospital or hospice volunteer, a peer counselor. Now that I have more understanding, I might reach out and lift myself and feel closer to God.**