

At some point during this process, you will encounter something that stops you in your tracks. A text message that reads like they are still here. A photo you have never seen before. An AI-generated 'memory' notification from a platform that does not know they have died. The practical work of managing someone's digital life is intertwined with the emotional reality of loss in ways that nothing else quite matches. This section is not a checklist. It is permission to pause.

## THIS CAN WAIT

Everything in this section can wait. There is no item here that is time-sensitive. Every part of the emotional work of processing someone's digital life can happen on your timeline. Months from now. Years from now. Or never, if that is what feels right.

## Taking Care of Yourself

- Set a timer when working through digital accounts -- commit to stopping after a defined period
- Take breaks between emotionally charged tasks and mechanical tasks
- Delegate mechanical tasks to a trusted helper: calling carriers, cancelling services, filling out forms
- Keep tasks that require personal judgment for yourself: what to memorialize, delete, save, or read
- Do not force yourself to look through photos, messages, or personal content until you are ready
- Keep a notebook nearby to write down thoughts or memories that surface
- Accept that this process will take months, not days -- give yourself permission to set it aside

## Platform Notification Management

Platforms like Google Photos, Apple Photos, and Facebook generate automated 'On This Day' or 'memory' notifications that can be devastating when they feature someone who has died. Turning these off is one area where acting sooner may be worth the effort.

- Facebook: Settings > Memories > turn off memory notifications
- Google Photos: Settings > Memories > hide specific people or time periods
- Apple Photos: For You tab > long press a memory > Delete Memory (or hide specific people)
- Unsubscribe from marketing emails sent to the deceased's accounts
- Turn off app notifications on the deceased's devices to stop constant pinging
- If the deceased's email forwards to yours, filter those messages to a separate folder

## Deciding What to Do With Accounts

For each account or digital artifact, consider four options:

- Memorialize:** Keep the account visible as a tribute. The profile is marked as belonging to someone who has died. Choose this when the online presence is meaningful.
- Delete:** Permanently remove the account. Choose this for accounts with no sentimental value or that pose identity theft risk.
- Archive:** Download all content and then close the account. Choose this when you want to preserve memories privately without maintaining a public presence.

**Leave alone:** Do nothing for now. This is a valid choice. Some accounts can remain dormant while you focus on higher-priority items. You do not owe anyone an explanation for your choices.

*Exceptions to be aware of: Microsoft accounts expire after 2 years of inactivity. Apple Legacy Contact access expires after 3 years.*

## When You Find Unexpected Content

People are complex. Everyone has parts of their life that are private. Discovering something you did not expect does not change who the person was to you.

You are not obligated to read everything -- you can close a conversation or app and come back later

If you find content involving potential harm to others, consult with an attorney

If you find evidence of unknown financial obligations, document them for the estate attorney

Talk to a counselor or trusted person if unexpected discoveries are weighing on you

Do not share the deceased's private content publicly without careful consideration

## Grief Support Resources

**The Dougy Center:** [dougy.org](http://dougy.org) -- grief support for children, teens, and families

**GriefShare:** [griefshare.org](http://griefshare.org) -- support groups (in-person and online)

**Nat'l Alliance for Grieving Children:** [childrengrieve.org](http://childrengrieve.org)

**988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** call or text 988

**GYST:** [getyourshitttogether.org](http://getyourshitttogether.org) -- Chanel Reynolds' original resource

**Identity Theft Resource Center:** [idtheftcenter.org](http://idtheftcenter.org) -- if identity theft adds to your stress

*The digital estate work can wait. You cannot pour from an empty cup. If you need to stop and take care of yourself, stop and take care of yourself.*