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Grieving in the New Year

By: Claire Bidwell Smith

If you're like me, the new year always brings an opportunity for renewal and a fresh start. Except when you're grieving. When you've lost someone you love – recently, or even years ago – the new year can bring on a tidal wave of emotions and expectations. The idea of starting over in the new year can feel unwanted or even just overwhelming.

New Year's Resolution: Be less sad. Impossible.

If you have this one on your list strike it out right now! I've heard so many clients tell me stories of trying to "quit" grieving at the beginning of the year, only to have this resolution fall flat on its face.

New Year's simply looks different for those who are grieving. You may find yourself feeling more alone than ever as you watch your friends and loved ones carry on celebrating and making resolutions to embrace the year ahead. Because when you're grieving there is a poignancy that comes with the passing of time, and nothing feels like more of a reminder of this than the new year.

I'll never forget the first new year after my mother died. She had been gone for almost a year but when the clock struck 12 that night and the minutes carried forth into a year in which she was not alive, I literally sank to my knees in pain in the back hall-

way of a nightclub.

The intense pain I felt in that moment was unexpected for me. For most of that first year, I had felt numb. But when the hands of the clock began to move forward and I realized I was entering a year in which she would not be a part of, I felt overcome with searing grief. The club patrons carried on celebrating around me and I curled into a corner of the hallway sobbing into my hands, missing my mother more than I could stand, and not knowing how I would get through an entire lifetime without her.

Allow Grief to be Part of Your New Year

Be kind to yourself in the new year. You don't have to make the traditional fresh start, embrace diets, work out regimes, or start a daily gratitude list. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or whether it's been many years since the loss, it's important to honor your feelings and give yourself the proper time you need to grieve. There will be other years in which you can feel celebratory again. But this year be gentle with yourself.

Let your resolution be one of vulnerability. So many of us are afraid to feel all the big emotions that come after a loss. These feelings can be overwhelming and also make you feel like you are not functioning like everyone else around you but let that

GRIEVING IN THE NEW YEAR...CONTINUED

be okay for now.

I've had many people tell me years after a loss that they feel they missed an opportunity in their grief – that they did not let it in when given the chance, and that it hardened something about their relationship with their loved one.

Use the new year to take a deep breath and to embrace who you are in this moment. We change so much more than we realize. So, remember that you will not always be in this space, but while you are, allow yourself to feel all that comes with loss.

There is undeniably an identity shift that comes with losing someone close to you. Be it a friend, family member, spouse, or child, their absence in your life will force change upon your soul. Most of us try to resist that change, thinking that the answer to getting through the pain is to try to remain exactly the same, to try to retain the person you were before the loss. But in fact, the opposite is true.

When we can allow ourselves to let the loss shape us and change us, we will grow with experience, rather than against it. And whenever we stop resisting something then we can give ourselves the opportunity to heal.



The Year of Letting Go

Let this be the year of letting go. Not of your loved one, but of your expectations of yourself. You will never get over your loved one and you do not ever need to let go of them, but in order to heal you do need to release the idea that you can remain unchanged.

Each time you find yourself judging your grief process – whether it's thinking you are too sad or too angry or simply too consumed by it all – let go and know that whatever you are feeling right now is normal and natural. You will eventually reach a state of less pain and sadness and anxiety. You will find a new normal. Until then, be gentle with yourself.

Meditation for the New Year

I want to walk you through a simple meditation that you can do anytime you have a quiet and private space for 5-10 minutes. Don't worry if you've never meditated before. Just give it a try.

First lie back in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Then take a moment to simply breathe and become attuned to your body. When you are ready, I want you to imagine that you are rising up above yourself and looking down.

Take note of everything that you are experiencing in this moment in time. Do not resist what you see. If you think you are too sad, or too heavy or too scattered or too whatever I want you to let yourself see it and accept it anyway. This is who you are in this moment.

Take another moment to imagine reaching down and stroking your own head in a loving way. Forgive yourself for anything you think you are doing wrong and just for this one moment, during this meditation, let yourself feel real love and compassion for who you are, right here and right now.

Give yourself a message of reassurance and love. See yourself as you would see a friend or a child, and meet yourself with true compassion.

When you are ready, return to your body and take some slow, deep breaths before you open your eyes. Do this meditation as often as you need. It will help keep you present and balanced in the new year. And remember, the path to healing starts with giving yourself space to grieve.

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EDITOR'S JOURNAL

In my journey through grief, Gary always told me I could find a story in everyday experiences. He was right!

IT'S OKAY TO SHOW YOUR GRIEF

By Nan Zastrow

"There are some who bring a light so great to the world, that even after they have gone the light remains."

Recently, at the gym, a trainer stopped me and asked, "Why do you have that penny attached to your shoe?" Surprised, I simply replied, "It's a special penny."

The penny was given to me by my husband Gary when we were dating. It came from one of those machines that stamp out a penny and create a heart shaped hole in the middle. I carried it in my purse for many years and then one day decided (after Gary's death) to string the shiny copper penny on the lace of my workout shoes to remind me of him because when I would say, "I should go to the gym." He would confirm that was a good thing and I should go.

I wasn't satisfied with my half-answer to the trainer. She looked at me quite puzzled and walked away. Minutes later I felt obligated to explain the real significance to her. My heart pounded a bit as I approached her, not knowing her very well at all, and thinking to myself, "You don't owe any explanation. She was just curious. Just let it go." But the "grief teacher" in me couldn't resist. I interrupted her browsing cell-phone minute and said, "I'd like to explain more why I wear that penny on my shoe" and proceeded without giving her a chance to object. "It's called a linking object, and it creates a continued bond with my husband who recently died."



I could see by the look on her face that she was probably thinking, "Why did I open my big mouth. I didn't need to know that." As many times as we passed each other in the gym and greeted casually, she didn't know that Gary had died. And being twenty-something, the death of an older person, and the number of us at the gym, wasn't unusual.

When I walked away from that encounter, I felt pride in giving into my desire to explain and thought, "It's okay to show your grief." Grieving people don't have to hide in the closet any longer. We've come a long way from those days I experienced after the death of my son and ten weeks later his fiancé to suicide. Those days, over 3 decades ago, have passed. Thank goodness! We are talking about and showing our grief now. We wear

IT'S OK TO SHOW YOUR GRIEF...CONTINUED



symbolic jewelry, clothing, tattoos, decals on our vehicle, and other visible items to acknowledge the death of a loved one. We hold vigils after horrific mass murders or terroristic attacks. People bring flowers, write poetry, sing songs, hug, and show their tears whether or not they know the deceased. It's okay to show your grief.

We, the bereaved, frequently remind others of the life of our loved ones through social media, so they won't forget someone that changed our lives. Some build websites and pages of honor for friends and families to go to and post memories. We send reminders on the anniversary date on social media to acknowledging a loved one's death. We create traditions that we continue year after year to remember them such as charity walks/runs, golf outings, and other sporting events. It's okay to show your grief.

We hold celebrations of life "parties" months and sometimes hold annual events to honor someone loved because we don't want others to forget the person who lived and made our lives richer just by their presence. At my family celebration of life party in July following the death of my husband, Gary, I asked each family member to write down a memory or thought about Gary. They placed it in a special gold box, and I taped the box shut to privately open on January 15, 2024—one year after his death. This ritual meant a lot to me though I'm expecting a very emotional reaction on that day. I extended a similar invitation to friends and those messages I've also gathered to read in January. I want them to know that their relationship with Gary was important too. It's okay

for them to remember and acknowledge their relationship and memories. It's okay to show your grief.

Therefore, if I continue to talk about my husband and/or my son months and years after their death. Know that it's okay. I'm not stuck in my grief. I'm not a "forever griever". I'm not asking you to have pity on me. I wish for you to acknowledge, accept, and rejoice in the fact though these loved ones have died, their lives mattered. It's okay for you to feel a little sadness and grief too. It's okay to show you still grieve.

I'm asking you to accept that grief lasts far beyond the cultural expectation of a year. It's a part of my life experience, a chapter in my story of life that made me who I am today. My stories tell you about the joys and the heartaches that reside in my spirit and my soul with a vivid memory of a person(s) whom I loved and have lost. I share my feelings with family who helped form the foundation of all that I value. It's healthy to honor and remember. It's normal to want to share those memories. Telling their story and talking about their deaths gives me power and control over my grief. Yes, I may shed tears, but that's okay too. And, above all, it's okay for me (or you) to show your grief for however long it takes.

To learn more about continued bonds and ways to honor your loved one and keep their memory near to your heart, Nan suggests purchasing her new release book, *How to Honor and Create Your Connection With Someone Loved After Loss*. Nan shares a glimpse of her deep love and bond of 55 years with her husband, Gary. She offers over 60 simple ideas she used (and some she continues) to heal a broken heart and live through and beyond her loss.

This book makes a thoughtful gift for yourself or someone else bereaved. Keep a spare copy in a drawer available when you want to soothe the heart of someone who lost their loved one and wants their memory to live on!

Reader Feedback



The holidays are right around the corner and along with them comes the anxiety of what should I do? Holiday traditions are sometimes altered by the loss of a loved one because they can bring painful memories, or they were arranged by the person who died. What holiday tradition for you was difficult to continue? Or how did you alter one that was difficult and continue it but make it more comfortable for everyone?

WHICH HOLIDAY TRADITION DID YOU CHANGE OR DISCONTINUE

For example: On our first Christmas without our son, I dreaded putting up a Christmas tree because many of the ornaments were those gifted to Chad and Jalane. My husband, Gary, insisted that we needed to put up a tree. We did. But I changed it. All the ornaments were angels, stars, bells, or white and gold ornaments. Each of the new ornaments was hung using fishing twine from Chad's tackle box. I found some word ornaments: Peace, Joy, and Love that added to its meaning. The tree sparkled with a new feeling that year.

One of my friends was really big on Christmas. He prioritized gift giving and setting aside time to be with people. I always looked forward to spending time with him during Christmas. I now try to make special gifts for people in my life and prioritize spending time with them. I think of him every year when I do this. His birthday was also in early January so to end the holiday season I go out and do things we used to do together on his birthday. My other friend's birthday was in October, right before Halloween. I always celebrate his birthday by doing something he would have done. Last year I bought one of his favorite games and played it in his memory.

Jacob
Wisconsin Rapids, WI

The one tradition I changed was my son's birthday on September 22nd. For the past 18 years, since his murder while teaching English in China, I have a memorial birthday dinner in San Diego where he lived and attended SDSU. His professors and friends attend. We have a lovely dinner and someone always brings a birthday cake. We sing Happy Birthday to him. His Chinese name was White Rabbit or Bai Tu. He sends so many signs then. On his birthday I saw a planter with five cement rabbits. Everyone always has great stories about how Darren reached out and helped someone.

Maxine
North Hollywood, CA

Our first Christmas without Jim was Very hard. I had little, if any, Christmas Spirit. So, I did the unthinkable ----- I actually ordered a pre-lit fake Christmas tree! I decorated it with special ornaments that Jim had given me over the years, and many of the little personalized ones that I had ordered. They had all of the sweet verses that gave me comfort such as "Your Wings were ready, but my heart was not". Then I added MANY Poinsettias. It really looked beautiful! I was concerned that the "Santa Train" would not make its run, but three awesome grandsons not only managed to FIND the Santa Train and all of its special cars and GOT IT TO RUN! (It took them 3 hours). So a tradition that started in Chicago, I think in 1968, continued. The Santa Train cars were loaded with wrapped \$2 bills for EVERY member of the family. Another tradition was Family Prayer.

READER FEEDBACK...CONTINUED

We gathered together holding hands (and the circle grew larger and larger) and Jim would give the prayer. All of a sudden I heard someone holler “family prayer time”, and my youngest son took over. I will freely admit that when almost everyone was gone, I had a total meltdown!! All that mattered was that we DID have our Family Christmas, and my heart tells me that Jim was here with us.

Carole
Wausau, WI

Being thankful for what you had and what you didn't have. Looking at thankfulness thru the eyes of our loved one (surprise! I didn't suffer, or my pain was short lived, or it would have been so hard to say goodbye, or I couldn't face living without you, etc.)

Might help to not feel guilty. I remember telling my dad, when he asked why it had to be my mom, I told him that he was always the brave one. Mom would have been afraid to live alone, to go places alone, to pump her own gas. She didn't want to leave you, but her body couldn't stay. He said he could accept that.

Susan
Wausau, WI

My dad passed last year in April. I did not go to Christmas Eve service like we did together every year. We went to a small church in Dancy that my family has been attending for over 120 years. It was always a joke that my dad would kick someone out if they were in his seat when we got there, since many only attend services for the holidays and he went every week. I don't think I can go this year either. I have a feeling I would cry through the whole Mass...

Tina
Mosinee, WI

One of our Holiday traditions was to pick out a live Christmas tree together. After my husband, Bob, died; my younger brother, Randy, helped with getting us a live tree. So we still had a live tree on that first Christmas without Bob, but it stood in the living room without any decorations that year. In the years that followed, after our first difficult Christmas, the tree was back up with decorations. Now we have special meaningful ornaments that are used to decorate the Christmas tree and we have a new loving tradition - every year a small unwrapped present is always put out in Bob's memory.

Diane
Weston, WI

One of our holiday traditions I stopped after my husband died was putting up a real Christmas tree. I knew I could not maneuver it into a stand myself nor could I imagine a Christmas tree without my husband. We had always enjoyed decorating our tree together with our collection of special ornaments pertaining to something we had done the previous years. Some of the ornaments were from places we vacationed and some were from special events of the past years. It was always fun to talk about the events of prior years together each season as we decorated our tree.

One day after I had moved into an apartment, my good friend showed up at my door carrying a small artificial Christmas Tree, lights and decorations. She told me she was going to decorate my apartment and did just that. She was wise enough to not ask me if I would like that done because I may have said I wasn't ready yet. That Christmas I found peace in the beautiful Christmas tree and decorations.

Sadly, the following year my friend Jan suddenly passed away.

I decided the following Christmas, in Jan's memory I would purchase the exact tree she had let me use. As I decorated the tree with the special ornaments Louie and I had collected over the years, I fondly remembered the wonderful events of our lifetime together. That little tree now represents a lifetime of love and friendship to me.

Sue
Edgar WI



On the Lighter Side...



FOOTBALL FINALLY MAKES SENSE

A guy took his blonde girlfriend to her first football game. They had great seats right behind their team's bench. After the game, he asked her how she liked the experience.

"Oh, I really liked it" she replied, "especially the tight pants and all the big muscles, but I just couldn't understand why they were killing each other over 25 cents."

Dumbfounded her date asked, "What do you mean?"

"Well, they flipped a coin, one team got it and then for the rest of the game, all they kept screaming was: 'Get the quarterback! Get the quarterback!' I'm like...Helloooooo? It's only 25 cents!!!!!!"

Dance on the Grave

A drill sergeant had just chewed out one of his cadets, and as he was walking away, he turned to the cadet and said, "I guess when I die you'll come and dance on my grave."

The cadet replied, "Not me, Sarge...no sir! I promised myself that when I got out of the Army I'd never stand in another line!"



An Inspirational Story...

The Doll and the White Rose

Written by V.A.Bailey

I hurried into the local department store to grab some last-minute Christmas gifts. I looked at all the people and grumbled to myself. I would be here forever, and I just had so much to do. Christmas was beginning to become such a drag. I kinda wished that I could just sleep through Christmas. But I hurried the best I could through all the people to the toy department. Once again, I kind of mumbled to myself at the price of all these toys. And wondered if the grandkids would even play with them.

I found myself in the doll aisle. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a little boy about 5 holding a lovely doll. He kept touching her hair and he held her so gently. I could not seem to help myself. I just kept looking over at the little boy and wondered who the doll was for. I watched him turn to a woman and he called his aunt by name and said, “Are you sure I don’t have enough money?”



She replied a bit impatiently, “You know that you don’t have enough money for it.” The aunt told the little boy not to go anywhere, that she had to go get some other things and would be back in a few minutes. And then she left the aisle. The boy continued to hold the doll. After a bit I asked the boy who the doll was for. He said, “It is the doll my sister wanted so badly for Christmas. She just knew that Santa would bring it.” I told him that maybe Santa was going to bring it. He said “No, Santa can’t go where my sister is. I must give the doll to my Momma to take to her.”

I asked him where his sister was. He looked at me with the saddest eyes and said “She has gone to be with Jesus. My Daddy says that Momma is going to have to go be with her.” My heart nearly stopped beating.

Then the boy looked at me again and said, “I told my Daddy to tell Momma not to go yet. I told him to tell her to wait till I got back from the store.” Then he asked me if I wanted to see his picture. I told him I would love to. He pulled out some pictures he’d had taken at the front of the store. He said “I want my Momma to take this with her, so she doesn’t ever forget me. I love my Momma so very much and I wish she did not have to leave me.

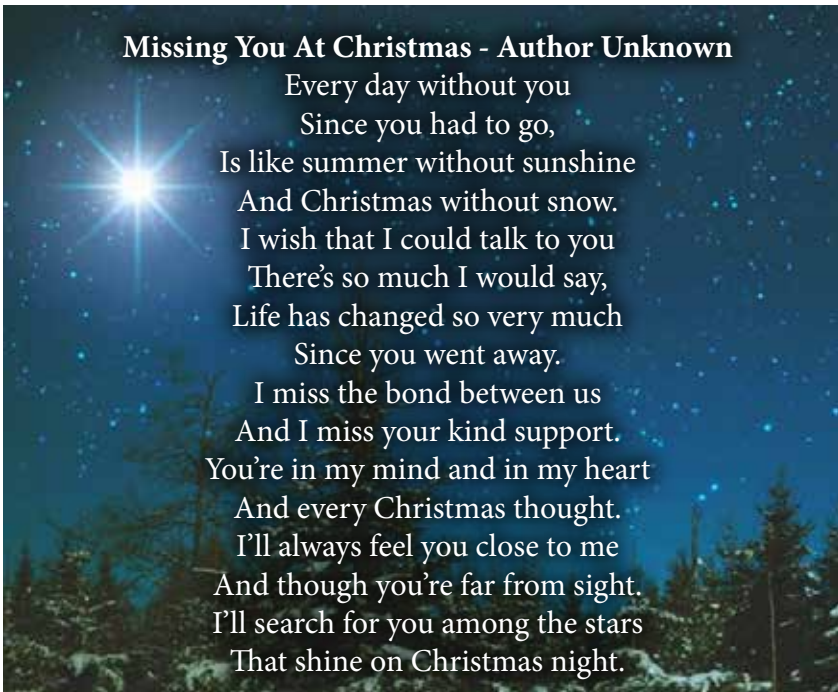
But Daddy says she will need to be with my sister.”

I saw that the little boy had lowered his head and had grown so very quiet. While he was not looking, I reached into my purse and pulled out a hand full of bills. I ask the little boy, “Shall we count that money one more time?” He grew excited and said, “Yes, I just know it has to be enough.” So, I slipped my money in with his and we began to count it. And of course, it was plenty for the doll. He softly said, “Thank you, Jesus, for giving me enough money.” Then the boy said, “I just ask Jesus to give me enough money to buy this doll, so Momma can take it with her to give to my sister and he heard my prayer! I wanted to ask him for enough to buy my Momma a white rose, but I didn’t ask him, but he gave me enough to buy the doll and a rose for my Momma. She loves white roses so very, very much.”

In a few minutes the aunt came back, and I wheeled my cart away. I could not keep from thinking about the little boy as I finished my shopping in a totally different spirit than when I had started. And I kept remembering a story I had seen in the newspaper several days earlier about a drunk driver hitting a car and killing a little girl and the mother was in serious condition. The family was deciding on whether to remove the life support. Now surely this little boy did not belong in that story.

Two days later I read in the paper where the family had disconnected the life support and the young woman had died. I could not forget the little boy and just kept wondering if the two were somehow connected. Later that day, I could not help myself and I went out and bought some white roses and took them to the funeral home where the young woman was. And there she was holding a lovely white rose, the beautiful doll, and the picture of the little boy in the store. I left there in tears, my life changed forever. The love that little boy had for his little sister and his mother was overwhelming. And in a split second, a drunk driver had ripped the life of that little boy to pieces.

Missing You At Christmas - Author Unknown



Every day without you
Since you had to go,
Is like summer without sunshine
And Christmas without snow.
I wish that I could talk to you
There’s so much I would say,
Life has changed so very much
Since you went away.
I miss the bond between us
And I miss your kind support.
You’re in my mind and in my heart
And every Christmas thought.
I’ll always feel you close to me
And though you’re far from sight.
I’ll search for you among the stars
That shine on Christmas night.

Some thoughts as
we enter the holiday season.

It’s important to remember not everyone is
looking forward to Christmas. Some people
are not surrounded by large wonderful families.

Some of us are having problems and are
overcome with great sadness when we
remember the loved ones not with us.

For many it is their first Christmas without a
particular loved one and many others lost loved
ones at Christmas. Some have no one to spend
these times with and are besieged by loneliness.
We all need caring, loving thoughts right now.

Please offer support to all those who have
family problems, health struggles, job issues,
worries of any kind & let them know you care.

Do it for all of us,
for nobody is immune.



Kelly’s
Treehouse

Rest in Peace Mr. President

The National Holiday with a Widow's Fingerprints

HAROLD IVAN SMITH, D Min

“So sad”, thought the townsfolk in Newport, New Hampshire when the brilliant young lawyer, David Hale died leaving a pregnant wife and four children under age seven. Before Social Security or welfare, there were few resources for a widow other than a quick remarriage. But Sarah determinedly opened a small millinery shop and began writing in spare moments. In 1822, if someone had asked Sarah, after yet another exhausting day, “Do you think there are good days ahead?” How would she have replied? Perhaps the same way you would.

Through her writing, Sarah Josepha Hale met the economic needs of her family and gained literary recognition. She became the editor of *The Ladies Magazine* and then in 1837, the influential *Godley's Ladies Magazine*. Mrs. Hale treasured the New England thanksgiving and wanted Americans to enjoy the holiday. So, in 1827, using the editorial page of the *American Ladies' Magazine*, Hale launched a campaign for a national celebration. “Thanksgiving like the Fourth of July should be a national festival observed by all our people.” Every summer for decades. Hale petitioned the nation's governors to proclaim a state thanksgiving (aware that governor's wives read the magazine and were effective “in house” lobbyists). Not all governors were receptive. Virginia's governor, Henry H. Wise, denounced her meddle-some notions about this “pet” holiday as theatrical national claptrap of Thanksgiving. As the Civil War intensified, Mrs. Hale stepped up her campaign. In September 1863, Hale appealed to President Lincoln to make thanksgiving “a fixed Union festival” to stir the hearts of soldiers—and their families—with the purest feelings of patriotism and the deepest motions of thanksgiving. Following decisive Union victories in Gettysburg and Vicksburg, Lincoln decided that the time was right. Around many tables and hearths that 1863, Thanksgiving, gratitude was offered for the president's war leadership and acknowledgement of the blessings of God. (Around a few tables, there were whispered thanksgivings for a persistent widow-editress, Mrs. Hale). Unfortunately, the “other” injunction in Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation has been forgotten. The President asked the nation to commend “to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged.” While having much to be grateful for, it was equally appropriate to recognize those in grief. And so, the fourth Thursday in November, 1863, the nation paused to count blessings. For 36 years, one woman had lobbied for a National Day of Thanksgiving, a campaign others would have abandoned. Mrs. Hale continued to lobby for a permanent legal holiday not subject to the proclamation of the president.

The implication of Ms. Hales' efforts are these:

- Grievers can learn from Sarah Josepha Hale. You may not be able to answer the “Why” questions, but you can ask, “Now what?” You can recognize that the griever you sit next to in a support group meeting, the griever you listen to over cups of coffee, or talk with on the phone, could be tomorrow's Sarah Josepha Hale.
- No one in 1822 would have encouraged the young grief-stricken woman, “Trust me, there are going to be good days ahead!” In the early days of grief there was nothing to indicate future greatness.
- By the end of a long career, Hale had authored some fifty books, raised large amounts of money to finish the Bunker Hill Revolutionary War monument and to preserve Mount Vernon, supported medical education for women, and penned the words, *Mary Had A Little Lamb*.
- While Sarah Josepha Hale did not volunteer for grief, she chose not to waste the experience either. She became a difference maker.

So, whatever your circumstances this holiday season, take a moment to voice gratitude for a griever who made a difference.





NAN ZASTROW
Co-Founder,
Wings – A Grief Education Ministry

Honoring the memory of a loved one during the holidays can offer the gift of peace. Sometimes family and friends aren't quite sure what will hurt or help you. So, they are reluctant to nudge your grieving heart. Here are ideas for you to invite family and friends to share your grief and ways they can acknowledge your loss by participating in your plans.

TEN WAYS TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE DURING THE HOLIDAYS

1. Play Secret Santa. It's likely the bereaved person will be missing out on opening a present on Christmas Day, a tradition their loved one handled. With other family or friends, purchase small gifts, wrap, and place them in a big sock, or bag. You could also make coupons for "tasks" you will do or places you will go with them. Deliver it to their doorstep early Christmas morning. It's a wonderful way to brighten their day and let them know they are not forgotten. (A friend of our son, Chad, did this for us many years ago. I will never forget it.)

2. Make It a Memory Box Moment. If you haven't created a Memory Box yet, use this holiday to do that. Search through your loved one's memorabilia and find items he or she saved that were important. At a gathering, open the Memory box and share the story of the items.

3. Caption This. Find a picture of the person who died (if possible, with you in it). Create a simple greeting card and include a humorous caption or a notable quote. Send this instead of a traditional greeting card. (I'm doing that this year in place of a traditional holiday card.)

4. Decorate a Theme Tree with new and different ornaments than you've never hung before. Ask family or friends when you gather to bring a "theme" item to hang on the tree. (We created an angel, bell, star, white and gold tree the first Christmas after our son's death.)

5. Create a Christmas Trivia all about your Loved One. This can be a serious trivia pursuit or one full of laughter and fun. Make up questions, that only you know (host



or have selected as your favorite answer. And let the fun begin. Use silly ideas such as: "If Gary added a ninth reindeer to Santa's herd, what would be his name?" Or a real idea such as: "Of the following which was Gary's favorite Christmas cookie?" Prize for the person who had the most right.

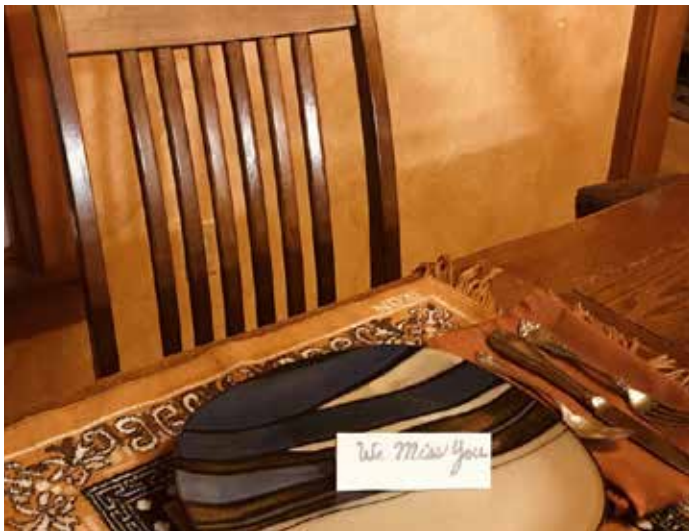
6. Wrap Up a Memory: As you sort through your loved one's belongings, find something that you feel connects the person you are giving it to with the person who died. Write a short note explaining your choice. (I did this for a small family Celebration of Life gathering. It was emotional and loving at the same time.)

7. Create a Toast in his/her honor making an alcoholic or non-alcoholic cocktail that you dreamed up. Then, name it after your loved one. Make it a tradition to begin the

TEN WAYS TO HONOR A LOVED ONE...CONTINUED

holiday meal with it year after year. (You could also make a side dish on entrée instead.)

8. Visit a Place they loved. Pick a local restaurant, park, museum, hiking trail, or any other place your loved one spent time. Ask everyone to assemble there. Celebrate with tailgate food, or order from a menu. Or serve champagne or hot cocoa to honor the occasion. Sing Carols. Give Hugs. Feel the spirit of love.



9. Reserve a Chair at the Table. Place a fresh bouquet of flowers on a chair at the table with a sign that reads: "Reserved for someone in heaven who is always present at our table."

10. Radom Acts Quest in memory of your loved one. At your gathering, ask each person to "do" a random act of kindness in memory of your loved one. Assign a completion date and have them report back on that date of what they did. Share the stories and reactions.



Don't Forget Small Children

- 1. Create a Paper Chain Garland for the tree.** On each loop of the chain, write a word that your child would use to describe someone loved who died. What a keepsake for the years ahead!
- 2. Find and Name a Holiday Mascot.** With all the cute stuffed animals in the stores during the holidays, ask the child to pick one that their special someone loved who died would have liked. Name it. Make it have a special place at the gathering table or somewhere else in the room for this year and in the future.
- 3. Send a Letter to Santa.** Help the child write a letter to Santa explaining how they will miss their loved one this year. Ask Santa to be kind and give a special gift in his or her memory to a child in need.



THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR WHAT GRIEVERS WANT YOU TO KNOW

By Nan Zastrow

Whether it's your First Noel or the persistent tenth after the death of a significant loved one, it's likely not going to be a **Rockin Around the Christmas Tree** kind of the year. There are painful reminders everywhere about what and who is missing that can't be ignored. Holidays are all about family, friends, and connections. While some bereaved just prefer a **Silent Night**.



It's not unusual for a griever to choose to have a **Blue Christmas** and not come **Home for the Holidays** this year or for several years to come. The dilemma of what to do or how to handle holiday grief is a personal one. If it was your loved one who said **You Make It Feel Like Christmas**, you could surely understand the reluctance for **Seasons Greetings**. Celebrating will strongly depend upon the bereaved person's resiliency and how far they've progressed in coping with their grief as to the decisions that rule their holiday this year.

Here's What Grievers Feel And Want Others To Know:

The hopeless **Unchained Melody** in a bereaved person's mind is **All I Want for Christmas Is You**. How could they wish for anything more? **What Do the Lonely Do at Christmas?** Likely, they will do whatever they can to hang on to **Christmas Memories** because **Christmas Won't Be the Same Without You**.

Should Old Acquaintances (Auld Lang Syne) be forgotten. Large crowds, even groups of related families and extended families can be a threat to **That Christmas Feeling**. Coaxing a griever into a crowd of stimulating holiday party noisemakers and **Jingle Bells** can quickly backfire. **Do You Hear What I Hear?** It's their cry to "**Remember Me at Christmas**". I am lonely and wondering **Who Took the Merry Out of Christmas**.

You're a Mean One Mr. Grinch. Every sight and sound resonates with **Christmas Once Again**. Unless you've been through it, you really don't have a clue what it's like to wake up and think **Christmas Will Be Just Another Lonely Day** when everyone is singing **Feliz Navidad** and you aren't. **Mary, Did You Know** that I'm not quite ready to let go of my grief yet?

Christmas is more than **One Day at a Time**. It begins before the **12 Days of Christmas**. Only then does reality hit home that **It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas**. Somehow, **We're Gonna Make It Through This Year**. Grievers just want to avoid the **Celebration**. They have little desire to **Deck the Halls** with elaborate decorations or hear the **Carol of the Bells** permeating throughout stores. And they're not expecting any gifts **Underneath the Tree**, not even a **Present Without a Bow**.

When Christmas Comes Around, everyone expects a Griever to feel **Merry and Bright**. However, there is mourning in the merry that steals its Glow. The joy and **The Magic of Christmas** for a griever is when they can

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR...CONTINUED

recall **Good Times**. There is nothing sweeter than fond memories and **The Gift of Love**. It's the greatest gift of all. **That's What Christmas Means to Me**.

It's **Not Christmas Til Somebody Cries** or laughs! What family doesn't watch **Christmas Vacation** or sing **Grandma Got Run Over by a Reindeer**. For many who grieve, **Laughter at Christmas** may be lacking. So, don't be surprised if **Christmas Makes Me Cry**. While on the other hand, a little levity can offer a moment of distraction and normalcy. In the right situation, a hurting griever just might laugh until they cry.

Memories awaken the **Ghost of Christmas Past**. Family and friends may think that strong encouragement for the bereaved to maintain traditions will be healing. They may suggest **My Favorite Things** to soothe my wilting spirit. On the contrary, **O Christmas Tree** might be the last tradition I wish to tackle. **Tinsel and Lights** or even a **Sleigh Ride** just might not be as beautiful as it was last year. There might be **Nuttin' for Christmas** to cheer about. Suggestions of ways to change traditions are okay, but never pressure a bereaved person to conform just because you think it would be good for them.

Merry Christmas Darling! No one has the capability of rewriting the past or bringing a loved one back. Grievers don't want to spoil the holiday for other family and friends but **Christmas Without You** is reality. **If I Make It Through December**, I'll be relieved. No matter how you color it, how you "sell it" or how you try to make it different. **Christmas Just Ain't Christmas Without the One You Love**.

Tis the Reason for the Season makes the holiday even more challenging. **Faith, Hope and Love**—the greatest of these is love. On **O Holy Night**, church goers offer greetings of **Let There Be Peace**. And, **It Came Upon a Midnight Clear** that the faithful must believe that "this too shall pass. That may not be comforting to a griever still be struggling with "Why?" **O Come All Ye Faithful** lend a hand, say a heartfelt **Christmas Prayer for Peace on Earth** and for the griever offer **A Christmas Blessing**.

It's true. Some Grievors find comfort in **Angels We Have Heard On High**. **The Heart and Soul of Christmas** resides in the bond with our loved one who died. Many bereaved find **Tidings of Comfort and Joy** in the glorious acknowledgement that their loved one remains present in their lives. **Their One Wish** (for Christmas) might be for that **Star of Wonder** guiding them home someday. They believe **Christmas in Heaven** is even grander than we can ever imagined. To my loved one: Know that **My Heart Goes On** without you and you are forever and **Aways On My Mind**. **The Spirit of Christmas** will forever be my **Love** for you **Until the Season Comes Around Again**.

A **Picture-Perfect Christmas** may not be in a griever's "selfie view" yet. Of course, some holidays will never meet the expectations of their **Last Christmas**. That is not to say that **Christmas at This Time Next Year** won't have all the possibilities of fulfilling the voids that this



year's holiday may intentionally impose. **If We Make it Through December**, the **Hope of Christmas** is that with time, healing, and continued support, the griever you are so arduously companionship may be singing, **I'll Be Home for Christmas** and proclaim that he or she has found that one thing---**Joy to the World**-- that can put the joy back into joyful and rebound. **Hallelujah! Go Tell It On The Mountain!**

TAMING THE HOLIDAY BLUES

By Nan Zastrow

This article is from the archives and updated to reflect my feelings today after the death of my beloved husband in January.

Who can ever forget (if you are old enough) when mood rings were the rage. I remember owning several. It was a novelty and a fun thing to do—calculate your mood of the moment. The stone in the ring subtly changes colors based on your own energy that reveals your inner emotions. At that point in my life, my ring generally took on tones of dark blue indicating happiness, love and romance.

If I gave each of my bereaved friends a “mood ring” during the holiday season, the rings would likely turn from tones of blue/green (inner emotions, charged) to gray or black indicating anxiety, nervous strain and tenseness. I know today, I am once again challenged with the tension of the holidays. I went through it once and here I am again feeling the same emotions, resistance, and indecision that I felt all those years ago. It isn't easy to turn it off even if you survived it once before.

Holiday stress happens to many people, not just the bereaved. We all have memories of the “perfect Christmas,” and each holiday we aspire to make this one better than the lesser one that lingers in our minds. (Such as those mandated by COVID.) We create grand expectations and then beat ourselves up trying to meet them. Add the complications of grief to normal holiday stress, and you typically will find a very energy-charged mood that borders on sadness or serious anxiety. It's called the holiday blues.

How do we know that what we are feeling is just the holiday blues and not something more serious? Do you get weepy when you see holiday decorations or hear holiday music? Do you feel rebellious and upset that others are having fun and planning celebrations which you can't/won't be a part of? Are you trying to avoid holiday parties and social get-togethers? Are you anxious about putting out holiday decorations or trimming a tree? Do you just want to run away until it's all over?

Chances are these are normal reactions to the coming holiday season for some bereaved. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, your body is telling you that you aren't ready to cope with the stress.

What causes holiday blues?

We all fantasize that holidays are a time of extreme happiness, good fellowship, family gatherings and energetic plans for the New Year. We relate to seasonal television shows where everything that was “wrong” suddenly becomes “right”. We expect that our lives should be just the same. We hope that we are “touched by angels” and can heroically accept misfortune and death as a fact of life. But many factors can contribute to holiday blues, and some are inescapable.



Some causes of “Holiday Blues” include:

- Death of a loved one now or in years past.
- Overwhelming demands, plans, finances, and other people’s expectations.
- Anticipating the death of someone who is seriously ill.
- Being alone. Feeling cheated of enjoying life, like others.
- Disappointment with current life situations.
- Memories of past holidays and reality of current ones.
- Other life changes: health, job, relationship.

How long do the holiday blues last?

For everyone it will be different. Many people begin feeling blue when the warm days of summer change to the brisk days of fall. The daylight becomes shorter, and the coldness brings on the “hibernation” syndrome. Seasonal traditions can trigger memories like Halloween events/parties, fall hunting season, harvest time and the blessings we remember at Thanksgiving. For some people, it’s only the Christmas holiday that bothers them the most. Unfortunately, that begins in September when the stores start displaying their holiday decorations and gifts. And Deal Days are emphasized on websites. For most people, the great anxiety of the holidays tapers off and life settles down once the New Year’s bell tolls—perhaps symbolic of a clean slate, a new beginning and hope.

What can I do to help me through holiday blues during my difficult time?

Trust that the holiday blues are normal, and they will pass. There isn’t any strategy that works for everyone and probably none that will cure the blues completely. But here are some ideas for taming the holiday blues that I’ve used in the past years to help my family and me. I’m planning to rely on my own advice once again this year.

Taming the “blues” #1: Cancel your expectations; traditions change. The pressure to be “happy” and “merry” over the holidays sometimes creates deeper sadness and loneliness. There are so many expectations to live up to—everyone’s expectations but our own! Accept that it is difficult for family and friends to understand what and how you are feeling. In most cases, it’s not intentional. They want us to be happy like they are, and they think they are doing us a favor by enticing us to join in the merriment. It may be necessary to “ask for understanding and support.” Recognize that all family relationships change over time and so do traditions. So, update your current situation to modify the traditions that will work for you. Your family and friends will also modify their holiday traditions at some time—and not necessarily because of the death of a loved one. You will see that as children grow and go off to college or get married, as parents and spouses die, family celebrations for most families change. While this death in your life is the immediate source of your emptiness and grief, soothe your pain by accepting that changes are inevitable for many reasons.

Taming the “blues” #2: Communicate, but stand your ground. You know you are feeling anxious about the pending holidays. You know what your fears are and what your potential problems will be. The rest of your family and friends don’t know what you are thinking or feeling. If you clue them into your fears, they may try to understand the reason for your actions and decisions. It will be easier for them to accept. However, it’s important to stand your ground. Sometimes, your family and friends

will try to coerce you into doing something you aren't able to handle. If you feel very firmly that this wouldn't be good for you this year, simply say, "I'm sorry. Not this time (this year) but ask me again sometime."

Taming the "blues" #3: Be socially flexible and escape. Don't make plans for social events and dinners too far in advance. But keep the option open to participate. Sometimes it's easier to say, "I'm not going to go to the church recital or to Grandma's for Christmas dinner," because you believe that it would be better to just be alone, but this isn't always true. Feel free to tell people that you are taking one day at a time, one hour at a time, or one event at a time. Most family and friends will respect your need to make a last-minute decision. Also, build in an escape. Drive your own car so when you are ready to leave, you can leave. Notify your host prior to coming that you aren't certain how long you will stay. Prepare an excuse if you feel you need one to allow you to leave with no questions asked. If you feel you really want to hold a social event in your own home over the holidays but aren't sure if you can "handle it," set limits. Invite guests but give them a beginning and ending time such as 7:00-9:00 p.m. Ask a trusted friend to lead the exodus" at a time when you want company to leave. This will give others the hint that it's time to go, and it also allows them permission to leave without offending you. Pre-planning makes the event bearable because you can control whether you go and when you leave. There's no need to skip all of the holiday social events, but I can certainly attest to the fact that often emotions can get in the way. Remember, it's okay to be social; it's okay to laugh and have fun.

Taming the "blues" #4: Decorate your heart first. If your heart tells you that decorating would be nice and would soothe the painful thoughts of the holidays, by all means decorate to your heart's content. If decorations and the thought of them scare you, don't put out any more decorations than your emotions will tolerate. In other words, do only what is comfortable for you this year. If a nativity instills the real meaning of Christmas, put it up. If a tree with keepsake ornaments is painful, forget the tree this year. I tortured myself the first year, but I felt I was making a sacrifice for my family. My daughter and Chad had received a keepsake ornament every year that was theme based. Jalane wanted to put the "kids" tree up; Gary thought it might be good for me. I did it, in private, and cried through every keepsake ornament I hung. Once the tree was decorated—a few days later—it was a source of loving memories. I didn't hang stockings. I didn't send holiday cards. I didn't attend the usual church and social events. I didn't bake cookies. I struggled with buying simple gifts. I didn't watch the favorite holiday videos. I didn't put out my Santa collection, but I did add to my angel collection. These were some of my limitations and my sources of comfort. This year, new again to grief, I haven't made those decisions. But there will be many. Things are very different again.



Taming the “blues” #5: Seek support, not sympathy. Rethink your attitudes about the holiday season and be honest with yourself. Are you rebelling because you are feeling sorry for yourself? Or are you truly feeling helpless, blue, and in need of quiet, private time to sort out your thoughts? Or do you need someone to talk to, give you a hug or spend some time with you? Sympathy will come automatically. How could anyone who cares about you not sympathize with the loss you are feeling? I don't believe for a moment that a loving human being can deny the evidence of pain and deliberately withhold comfort. Disarm your feeling of helplessness and use the feeling of sympathy to gain control. Ask for support. This is something everyone can relate to and rally around. People want to help, so tell them what they can do to help you. If your blues are part of multiple past losses, and you are feeling the magnitude of loss, recognize that when you grieve wholly, you will be able to experience good feelings when you reminisce. You may feel a twinge of sadness, but the deep pain will recede. Coping with and enjoying the holidays doesn't mean that you don't miss the person who was a special part of your life. Nor does it mean that you don't miss times the way they used to be. It means that you will continue to live after this difficult change. And you will honor the memory of your loved one in new ways. Surround yourself with people who understand that the holidays may increase your grief and you need their loving support that honors your feelings and helps you express your grief as needed.

Taming the “blues” #6: Forget words; find ritual. This is a lesson we learned repeatedly from Dr. Alan Wolfelt. Rituals can emphasize loving memories and give expression to feelings far beyond our vocabularies. As an individual or as a family, find a ritual that demonstrates your heartfelt feelings and do it! “Memories are your keepsakes, No one can take them away from you.” Take some time during the holidays to talk about good memories, share pictures, light a candle, place a wreath, contribute to a charity, or anything else that makes you feel good!

Taming the “blues” #7: Seek treasures of the soul. Going forward into the New Year is often difficult, but it can also be a time for cleansing and rejuvenation. Spend some time thinking about your recent experiences. What does it mean in your present and future life? Think about purpose and assess yourself as an individual. How can you help others through difficult times? Think about the positive things in your life and how you can use them to help you cope. Find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new meaning for existence.

Taming the “blues” #8: When the giving hurts, keep on giving. We are nurtured to believe that when something hurts, it's time to pull back, quit or change what we are doing. Not a holiday has passed since Chad's death in 1993 that hasn't caused me to hurt in some way. Over the years, Gary and I soothed the pain by “giving back.” We've hosted dozens of “When the Holidays Hurt” programs for the community. We've walked in their shoes. Every community has programs and events to subsidize those who need a little help to make their holidays comfortable. Find one and get involved. Ramp up your charity donations. Ring the bell for the Salvation Army. Sing in the choir at church. Pick a name from a “Giving Tree” and purchase a gift. Giving of self to others is by far the best antidote for holiday blues. When you wipe away the tears, clear the frog in your throat and calm the racing of your heart, you know what love and true joy are all about. There is no louder message that speaks of infinite peace on earth, goodwill to men.

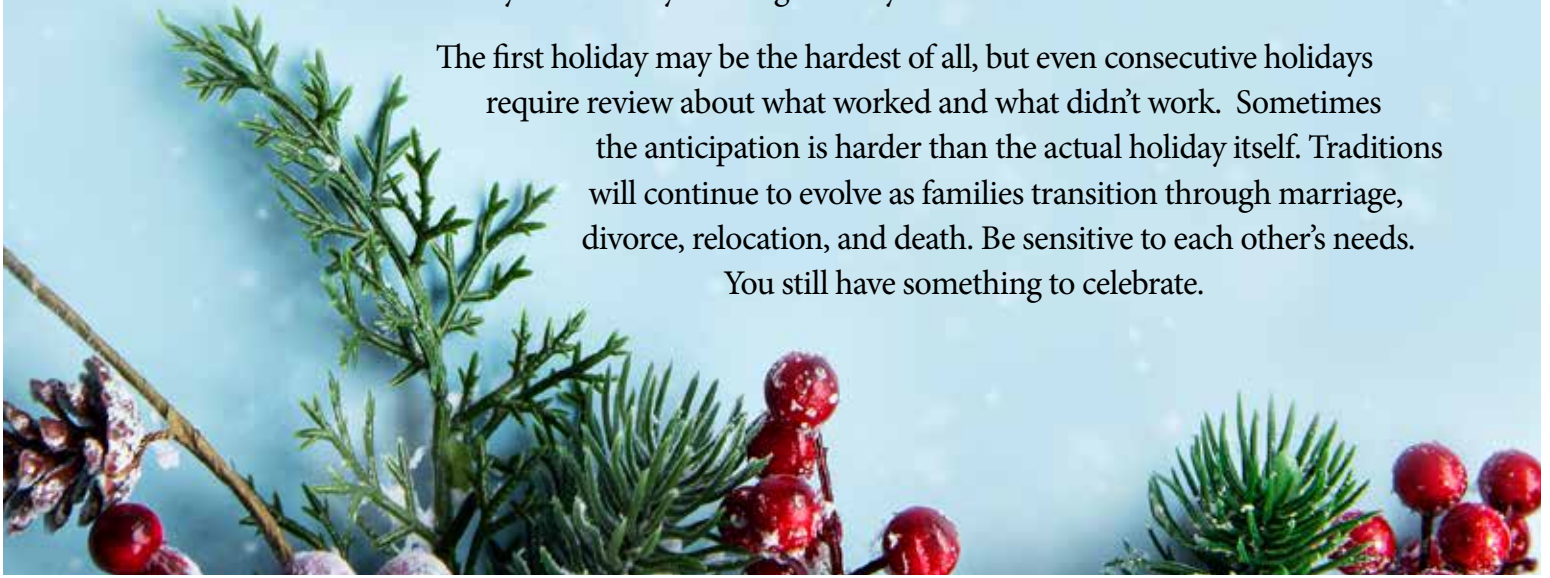
Be Good to Yourself SELF CARE TIP

Planning the transition in your holiday

It's not too early to have that conversation with family and friends how you will celebrate the holidays this year in the absence of your loved one. Gather everyone together and be honest about your emotions. Planning ahead is essential because no plan at all is bound to leave everyone hurting. Refusing to honor the old traditions doesn't stop anyone from remembering them. Incorporating ideas that honor your loved one or tells his/her story can save the day. Accept that your family is in transition; and perhaps, modifying the tradition to fit the family needs this year is a good way to start.

The first holiday may be the hardest of all, but even consecutive holidays require review about what worked and what didn't work. Sometimes the anticipation is harder than the actual holiday itself. Traditions will continue to evolve as families transition through marriage, divorce, relocation, and death. Be sensitive to each other's needs.

You still have something to celebrate.



Healing Tip to Comfort a Bereaved Child



Encourage a Child to Connect

The holidays may cause grief to resurface, even for children. It may be their first holiday without a parent, grandparent, sibling or friend. Invite your child to find some way to honor this special person. Encourage your child to make something to hang on the tree or take to the cemetery. Ask him/her to draw a picture of them spending Christmas together. Or help them write a letter that shares their plans for the holiday. Create a ritual that you could do every year that gives meaning to something this person did for them... for example bake cookies. Any thing you can do that allows them to remember the good times, talk about the person

who died, and create a visual connection will be a moment to remember.

The Way It Can Be - A Prayer for the Season

By Nan Zastrow

We give thanks, Oh Lord,
For the individual courage that brings us together in grief.
We sense each other's level of hurt and sorrow
And together we reach out to soothe our neighbor's pain.
The approaching holidays challenge the healing we've done so far
And we approach the holidays with great trepidation.

We give thanks for the warmth
Of kindred spirits who share our journey.
In the Past, holidays and special days once brought us joy.
Selfishly, we regress to our memories and are saddened by
The painful reminders of **The Way It Was**.
Our feelings are molded by those we have loved
And what we feel we have lost.
We search endlessly to renew the Gifts of the Past.
And ask for your blessing to find strength
In the special Love and Memories
That the Past has bestowed upon us.

In the Present, we struggle with the days and weeks ahead.
Our anxiety is heightened as we focus on **The Way It Is**, this year.
We sometimes turn away from family and friends instead of
Towards their loving arms and generous hearts
Because we are incapable of dealing with our fragile emotions.
Bless us with the sought-after Gift of the Present...
The Gift of Peace--a gentle reminder that
When we give our burdens to You, you give us help for
Mending our broken hearts.

As we approach the Future, we ask for patience and understanding
As we travel this lonely journey of grief.
Teach us to live in Your light.
Lead us forward with healing grace,
And help us find small miracles in every day.
Enlighten us with the vision of **The Way It Can Be** and
Place in our hearts compassion for others who grieve, too.
Teach us how to take our pain and transform it
Into purpose and meaning...
For this is the Gift of the Future and fulfillment of
Your promise of Hope.

Cook It... Freeze it... Or Eat it!



Meals for One...
Or Two if you
like leftovers.

One of my biggest challenges since my husband died is making meals. I'm not a lover of leftovers, so that makes it even more difficult. In this new column to my ELetter, I'd like to share recipes and ideas from those in the same situation. Each month, we'll select one or two to share with the readers. (If this column goes over well, it will continue to be a regular feature that anyone can use whether you cook for one or a whole tribe.)

For the next issue, please submit your recipe to nanwings1@gmail.com

SMALL BATCH PUMPKIN PIE BARS *(Makes a 5 x 5 inch baking dish or 4 x 6 dish)*

Ingredients:

6 tablespoons granulated sugar	1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt	1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves	1 large egg
7.5 ounces pure pumpkin puree (half of a 15-ounce can of pure pumpkin)	
6 ounces evaporated milk (half of a 12-ounce can of evaporated milk)	

Make the crust

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F (177° C).

Butter a 5x5-inch baking dish lightly. Line the dish with a piece of parchment paper that's been cut to fit the bottom and sides of the dish smoothly. This step ensures you can easily lift the bars out once they're done. After lining, remember to also apply a light layer of butter to the parchment paper itself.

2. With an electric hand mixer, blend the butter and sugar until it forms a smooth mixture.

3. Incorporate the flour, cornstarch, and salt into the butter mixture, blending until it becomes a unified dough.

4. Press the dough into the prepared 5x5-inch baking dish. Use either your fingertips or the back of a spoon to spread it evenly.

5. Place in the oven for 15-18 minutes or until it turns lightly golden. Once done, set aside to cool for 15 minutes.

Make the filling

1. In a small bowl, mix together sugar, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and cloves to create your spice blend.

2. In a separate bowl, use an electric mixer on medium speed to blend the egg, pumpkin puree, and the spice mix until the mixture is smooth.

3. Slowly pour in the evaporated milk and use an electric mixer to blend it into the mixture.

Assemble and bake

1. Pour the filling over the cooled crust. Place the dish on a rimmed baking sheet to catch any spills. Bake for 55-60 minutes.

SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

- Bake 1 large or 2 small sweet potatoes. (Or use canned sweet potatoes that you drain and rinse off in cool running water). Mash the sweet potatoes and put them in a bowl (you should have about 1 cup of mashed sweet potatoes).
- In a smaller bowl, mix together brown sugar, ground cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, ginger, ground cloves, and salt (seasonings per your taste). Pour the spice blend over the mashed sweet potatoes and stir.
- Add in one lightly beaten egg.
- Pour into a greased oven-safe ramekin.
- Top with 1/2 cup of pecans.
- Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from the oven, top with marshmallows, and bake for 10 minutes more. Leftovers can be refrigerated for 3—4 days. Rewarm in an oven at 350° for about 15 minutes.

CHEESY BAKED EGGS FOR ONE

prep time 5 minutes. Cook time 15 minutes

Ingredients:

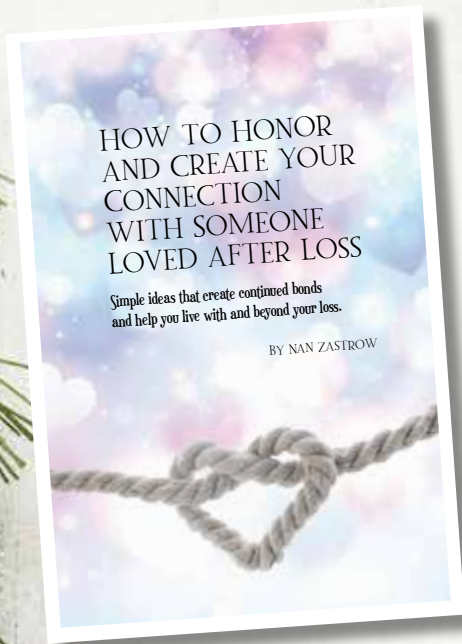
- 1 teaspoon salted butter, softened
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream alternatives: milk or half and half
- 2 tablespoons shredded Cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

1. Heat the oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C).
2. Coat the inside of an 10-ounce oven safe ramekin with the butter.
3. Whisk together the eggs and cream in a small bowl.
4. Stir in the cheeses, salt, and pepper.
5. Pour into the ramekin and bake for 15-18 minutes or until eggs are set.
6. Let cool 5 minutes and enjoy.



*Know someone who is grieving this holiday season?
Put this in your gift basket to show your support.*



How to Honor and Create Your Connection With Someone Loved After Loss

Simple ideas that create continued bonds and help you live with and beyond your loss

By Nan Zastrow



What is your motivation for getting out of bed in the morning

when the alarm goes off rather than turning it off, rolling over and going back to sleep? Grief has a way of robbing us of our energy, spirit, and hope. The action we take going forward can help us live comfortably with our grief in our new reality.

Research shows that it's normal, healthy, and healing for the bereaved to stay connected with their loved one through bonds like rituals or habits. It's a way to honor grief creatively rather than holding on to it and provides motivation for living with your loss today and beyond your loss through tomorrow. Simple everyday behaviors offer ways to never forget your loved one. They offer ways to discover that Ah Ha! Moment when you realize that life can go on and you are willing to engage in its wake-up call again.

In this book, Nan shares over 60 simple, applicable ideas that she has personally completed since the death of her beloved husband. Use this book as a "tool" to track your progress by checking off the ideas you've tried and record how it made you feel. Nan confirms that grief never ends.

However, continued bonds give you power and control over grief. Nan shares glimpses of "forever love" challenged by grief. It reveals a broken heart creating a path to healing allowing you to survive in a world that may always hurt. Don't just wish things would be different. Doing nothing prolongs your sadness and despair. Doing something brings you closer to finding hope, peace and joyful moments once again.

**Cost: \$8.95 | Available from Wings – A Grief Education Ministry
www.wingsgrief.org or email nanwings1@gmail.com. Also through
Centering Corp. www.centeringcorporation.org | 1-866-218-0101**



OCTOBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024

There is no charge for these groups. Registration is required for virtual groups to receive the link and for in-person groups to save a spot.



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS THE RIGHT TO GRIEVE

Tues., December 5, 2023 – 1:00-2:00 p.m.
INPERSON Presentation: YMCA, Wausau

VIRTUAL Webinar: Wed., December 6
6:00-7:00 p.m.

ZOOMGRIEF - Register online for a link www.wingsgrief.com

Are you anxious about handling your grief in the approaching holiday? While others find energy in the festivities of the holiday, missing a loved one can dampen your spirit. You shouldn't feel any pressure to participate in traditions that may make you uncomfortable. You have the Right to Grieve and choose what's comfortable for you. In this presentation, we'll share 30 of the most common holiday complaints grievers reveal. Learn how you can satisfy expectations without compromising your feelings. The "Good News" is that almost every bereaved person is capable of feeling some joy—even when the holidays hurt. We'll show you it's possible to "save the day" and your dignity when feeling vulnerable. Learn how to create a meaningful experiences this year and some that can last for years to come.



HOW TO BEGIN A NEW YEAR WITH HOPE

3 ATTAINABLE FRESH STARTS FOR THE BEREAVED

Tues., January 23, 2024 – 1:00-2:00 p.m.
INPERSON Presentation: YMCA, Wausau

VIRTUAL Webinar: Wed., Jan. 24, 2024
6:00-7:00 p.m.

ZOOMGRIEF - Register online for a link www.wingsgrief.com

As the New Year approaches, those who grieve realize that "life moves forward whether or not you like it". Just because the calendar changes, it doesn't mean you are "over it." You may still be facing the hard reality of life without someone loved. Those around you may be full of energy with resolutions and plans while you might be struggling to survive one day at a time. It's possible to glide into the New Year if you can approach it as a new opportunity for a new beginning. This program offers Hope. Committing to resolutions fail. Instead, find 3 attainable Fresh Starts that you can accomplish. Assess your progress and create a plan. Whether this is your first year without your loved one or many years since, now is the time to begin this new year with Hope.

Register online at wingsgrief.org or email: nanwings1@gmail.com



Certified Grief
Educator | Facilitator:
Nan Zastrow
wingsgrief.org
715.845.4159



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