

Grief Helps



Seven Things You Can Do to Help
You Grieve Through the Holidays

James E. Miller



*The yule-log sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.*

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

(WRITTEN AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS BEST FRIEND, 1833)

The holiday time can be a particularly trying time

to grieve the death of someone you love.

So much about the holidays can clash with your personal experience.

The fun and festivity commonly associated with this time of the year

do not mirror your own grief and sorrow.

The holidays often carry strong memories gathered through the years,

including any happiness you shared with your loved one—

happiness you wish you could recreate this year.

Holidays are a time when those around you who aren't grieving

have other things on their minds, so many other things to do,

leaving you feeling more isolated and alone.

So what can you do as you go through these times

in ways that are as healing as possible?

Following are seven brief ideas.



*The holiest of all holidays are those
Kept by ourselves in silence and apart;
The secret anniversaries of the heart.*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Here is a good place to begin:

Don't try to cancel the holidays this year.

That may be your first inclination.

"I can't possibly feel an ounce of happiness this time around,"
you may think.

"Best to forget it entirely."

But you cannot forget the holidays—they will not let you.

The holiday decorations and songs and sounds will surround you,
whether you want them to or not.

Holidays programs and rituals will go on as they always do;
even if you close your eyes and ears, you cannot avoid them all.

So it's best to accept that the holidays will be a part of your life,
even if you make them only a very *small* part of your life.

Perhaps there will be something about the true holiday spirit
that will touch you this year in an unexpected way.



*When schemes are laid in advance,
it is surprising how often the circumstances
fit in with them.*

SIR WILLIAM OSLER

Second, plan ahead.

Before the particular days roll around like clockwork,

give some thought to the options you have.

Will you make a few changes in how you celebrate this year,

or many changes?

Will these be minor changes or major ones?

Talk things over with family and friends before deciding.

Then develop a plan for what seems a comfortable way

to spend the time that's approaching.

Third, do any holiday shopping with your diminished energy in mind.

Will you shop from catalogs? Online? Use gift cards?

Will you choose rather to donate to your loved one's favorite charity

as an alternative this year?

Might you ask someone to shop with you, or for you?

What gifts might you give that are without monetary value?



*Some memories are realities
and are better than anything
that can ever happen to one again.*

WILLA CATHER

Fourth, symbolically include your loved one in your gatherings.

Live out your truth:

their death does not remove them entirely from your life.

Might you include them in your prayer before your meal,

or offer them to toast them, or light a candle in their name?

Re-tell favorite stories about them; share photo albums or scrapbooks.

Make a sure place for your loved one in your day.

Fifth: do something to officially commemorate your loved one's life.

Might you plant a tree or create a garden, placing their name on it?

Might you donate to a charity or start a scholarship,

making sure it's in keeping with their interests and passions?

Might you build something and dedicate it to their memory?

Whatever you do, make sure you mark it with a few words,

or a little ceremony, inviting others to join in if they wish.

Help your loved one's spirit continue on.



*The one who wishes to secure the good of others
has already secured one's own.*

CONFUCIUS

Sixth, help others who have their own needs during these holidays.

After all, you are not alone in having things go less than perfectly.

Might you volunteer at a food pantry or a soup kitchen,

in a hospital or at a nursing home?

Might you adopt a family with financial needs?

Might you invite someone in who has nowhere else to go this year?

Despite your grief, and even because of it,

you have something to give that is uniquely yours to give.

Finally, be ready to change any of the plans you've made

if you sense that's for the best as the time approaches.

Even though you've thought it all through beforehand,

sometimes your thinking and your feeling go in different directions.

As the moment arrives, you may sense that what you planned

is better saved for another year, or perhaps another family.

Allow yourself plenty of flexibility—you deserve it.



*What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved
we can never lose, for all that we love deeply
becomes a part of us.*

HELEN KELLER

The journey before you this year may not be easy.

But it is doable.

And there is help all along the way,

whether it comes from others around you

or others who have gone before you,

whether it's from deep within yourself

or a Source far beyond yourself.

May you come to feel that your life is the richer

for the experiences you've known, the love you've felt,

the loss you're enduring and learning from,

and the strength you're gaining.

May some part of your holidays hold a poignancy for you

that will unite you warmly with the one you love

and in a way that you do not soon forget it.

Resources for Grieving People

BY JAMES E. MILLER

Books

One You Love Has Died
When Mourning Dawns
What Will Help Me?
A Pilgrimage Through Grief
When a Man Faces Grief
Winter Grief, Summer Grace
How Will I Get Through the Holidays?
Change & Possibility
Un Ser Amado Ha Fallecido

DVDs

When Mourning Dawns: The DVD
Invincible Summer
Listen to Your Sadness
How Do I Go On?
By the Waters of Babylon
We Will Remember
Nothing Is Permanent Except Change

Electronic Resources

100 Healing Messages for Your Grief: Emailed Videos
Grief's Healing Journey: An eNewsletter



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