Four Words of Hope for Those Grieving During the Holidays

James E. Miller
The only cure for grief is to grieve.

Joshua Liebman

I had thought that your death
Was a waste and a destruction,
A pain of grief hardly to be endured.
I am beginning to learn
That your life was a gift and a growing
and a loving left with me.

Marjorie Holburn
It’s not easy to grieve any time of the year.
It can be doubly difficult to grieve during the holidays,
when so many memories, so many strong feelings come into play.
It’s no wonder, then, that you may dread the holidays
if you’re mourning the death of a loved one.
At such a time it’s worth asking,
“Is there anything positive I can hold on to
when my grief season meets up with the holiday season?”
I believe there are four hopeful possibilities worth remembering.
First, many grieving people, after the holidays are over,
say that their experience was not as difficult as they feared.
In spite of their sadness and sorrow,
in spite of any episodes of feeling lonely or lost,
they commonly say, “I feared it was going to be worse
than it actually turned out to be.”
Pain and death are part of life. To reject them is to reject life itself.

Havelock Ellis

Great grief is a divine and terrible radiance which transfigures the wretched.

Victor Hugo
Second, most grieving people also report

that they experienced comforting moments of soothing peace,

or quiet joy, or grateful love,

however long these moments lasted.

Being ready to come upon such moments helped,

but, ready or not, still they appeared.

Sometimes other people were involved in these comforting moments—

people who reached out in sensitive and giving ways,

or made thoughtful gestures of encouragement and support.

Sometimes it was people who had not been close before,

strangers even, who knew from their own experience

what helped and what didn’t help at times like this.

Sometimes the feeling of comfort came from the sense

that one’s loved one was somehow present in spirit in this time

in a way that words cannot explain.
Grief is itself a medicine.

William Cowper

Only people who are capable of loving strongly can also suffer great sorrow, but this same necessity of loving serves to counteract their grief and heals them.

Leo Tolstoy
This can be a third source of hope:

when grief comes face-to-face with the holidays,

the holidays can be true to their origins.

For the word *holiday* comes from two words, *holy day*—

days deemed holy by various religious traditions,

    days made to feel sacred by a history of family commemorations.

Such days can become those times when the underlying messages

    of the holidays can come surprisingly alive:

That the light *does* shine when and where you wouldn’t expect it.

That the Divine *does* appear, in our ordinary lives,

    sometimes in common ways, and sometimes in the *uncommon*.

That the miraculous *can* still happen,

    and it’s only a heartbeat away.
She was no longer wrestling with the grief, 
but could sit down with it as a lasting companion 
and make it a sharer in her thoughts.

Mary Ann Evans

Take this sorrow to thy heart, 
and make it a part of thee, 
and it shall nourish thee 
till that art strong again.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Finally, while you may still miss your loved one, even desperately, you may, in this time of remembering and honoring, also feel a confirmation and validation of what you’ve had, and the love you’ve shared, and the meaning you made.

In addition to feeling close to the one you love, you may also have moments of feeling a close connection with others around you—those who understand, those who clearly want what is best for you.

So may this be your experience:
as you grieve during this holiday season, may you grieve hopefully, and tenderly, and lovingly.

And may you sense that these days form an integral part of your movement toward healing and wholeness.
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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