

Grief Helps



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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