

Grief MATTERS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2022

On The Journey

Holidays can be difficult for those who are grieving. Do we keep the same traditions and rituals from when our loved one was with us? Do we change everything so that nothing is the same?

These are difficult decisions. Perhaps what we could do is prioritize the demands and activities of the holidays by taking inventory of the activities that we “always do.” Being able to decide what is best for each of us during the holidays is essential. We may drop some activities and traditions to start new and simpler ones. One of the tasks of grieving involves making choices along the way.

It may be helpful to share your feelings with your family and friends to help them understand why you feel you need to make changes. Help them to understand that even though you are making some changes this year, it does not necessarily mean they will be set in stone. Allow yourself a holiday season to try something different. Then you can decide next year what you need to do at that time.

Bereavement support is also available via the internet. TED Talks is a non-profit organization devoted to sharing ideas. They cover a variety of subjects including grief. Visit their website

at www.ted.com and type the word “grief” in the search box and you will receive a list of talks. On-line websites on grieving may be helpful. Here are a few to try:

- Whatsyourgrief.com
- Douggy.org
- Soaringspirits.org
- Griefshare.org

“Trust that the present moment—however difficult, however different from what you imagined—has something to teach you. Keep moving.” —Maggie Smith

Blessings on your journey,



Rev. Kris Abbey
Chaplain, Grief Counselor

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published bi-monthly.*

HOSPICE OF LANSING
3186 Pine Tree Rd., Ste. 1
Lansing, MI 48911
Phone: (517) 882-4500
Fax: (517) 882-3010
hospiceoflansing.org

IONIA AREA HOSPICE
PO Box 124
Ionia, MI 48846
Phone: (616) 527-0681
Fax: (517) 882-3010
ioniaareahospice.org

STONELEIGH RESIDENCE
3411 Stoneleigh Drive
Lansing, MI 48910
Phone: (517) 882-4500
hospiceoflansing.org

Grief Services Online

For information on upcoming grief support meetings and events, visit us online at: hospiceoflansing.org or ioniaareahospice.org.

Mailing List

Please call (517) 882-4500 or e-mail kabbey@hospiceoflansing.org if you wish to be removed from this mailing list.

To view Grief Matters online please visit hospiceoflansing.org or ioniaareahospice.org. Click on “Grief Support” at the top left of the page. Scroll down and you will find the links to the most recent issues.

If you would like to receive a physical copy, please fill out the form on the same page, next to the links. Please be assured we do not sell or share our list with other organizations or businesses.

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On Coming Alive: Journaling Through Grief

Allowing Yourself to Feel

Don't be afraid to feel. Feel pain, feel joy, feel love, feel anger, feel excitement or happiness. Feeling is good, and sometimes, after going through the hardest parts of life, we have to remind ourselves to stop ducking for cover, to stop wincing and grimacing, afraid to feel because we are afraid to break. If you are there, take a step today and let yourself feel something. It might be scary at first, it might hurt a little, but the whole thing about coming alive doesn't mean that you won't feel pain. It simply opens your heart to joy as well. What are your feelings right now? Take a minute to tap into them, to ask yourself how you're really doing beneath the surface and write it out.

“And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our feet, and learn to be at home.”

WENDELL BERRY

“In every heart is an inner room, where we can hold our greatest treasures and our deepest pain.”

M. WILLIAMSON

“Grief is not about relinquishing our relationship with the deceased, but about finding ways to stay connected.”

THERESE A. RANDO

AUTHOR OF “HOW TO GO ON LIVING WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE DIES”

Getting Through the Holidays after the Loss of a Loved One

The first Thanksgiving, the first Christmas, the first birthday and all other firsts without your loved one may be very difficult. There is no way to avoid the memories and the accompanying grief that these times call up.

For most of us holidays are full of traditions: “We always went to Mom’s on Thanksgiving.” “Harry always decorated the tree and lit it on Christmas Eve.” “We always went to Coral Gables on our anniversary because she loved their bread pudding.” These memories will forever be sacred AND painful. They are signs that our relationship with our deceased loved one was meaningful and real. They are signs that our love does not end when a life ends.

Holidays, like losses, cannot be avoided. Sometimes our grief feels unbearable and we may try to escape the pain. The key is to try to find a balance.

What is helpful for one may not be so for another. You may want to experiment with different ways to cope with the holidays; different ways to face the empty chair, allowing your grief to be a part of the occasion. Some people want to be alone. Some want to be with someone they feel close to. You may want to start a new ritual to acknowledge your loss and celebrate your love that lives on. Something as simple as lighting a candle and saying:

“On this day I remember _____ and give thanks for the time we had together.”

Whatever choices you make; remember to be kind to yourself. Respect your needs. You may want to be with others or you may want to be alone. Take note of what feels right for you even if others make suggestions that they think you should follow.

Honor where you are. This may be the year that you don't celebrate the holidays even though it seems everyone else is in a joyful mood. This may be the year you help serve Christmas dinner at a homeless shelter, or just stay home and write a letter to your loved one who is no longer with you.

Even though grief groups are not meeting at this time please know we can provide support by phone or in office or home support. You are welcome to call with any questions or concerns or if you need someone to talk to about what you are experiencing.

Hospice of Lansing - (517) 882-4500
Ionia Area Hospice - (616) 527-0681

~Ann, Social Worker

Legend of the Lotus

Out of the depths and shadows from the bottom of a pond, the lotus emerges, untouched and unstained.

Representing the purity of the mind and soul, the lotus flower is a powerful symbol of peace, hope, transcendence and rebirth. The lotus reminds us to strive through difficulties and that beauty and light can rise from the murky darkness.

