

GREIF AND SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall
into the heart of the sea”**

(Psalm 46:1-2)

For those of us dealing with illness, grief or the loss of a loved one, the holidays can be a time of sadness, pain, anger, or dread. The pain of grief can become overwhelming with worries of memories, particularly during Thanksgiving and Christmas. It can be difficult to cope, especially when you see the sights and sounds of holiday happiness all around you.

We have been especially challenged with the Covid-19 pandemic, civil unrest, economic hardship and more.

Grief can also magnify the stress, that is often already apart of the holidays. How can you begin to fill the emptiness you feel when it seems that everyone else is overflowing with joy.

There are a few strategies that you can employ to help you get through this season.

1. Offer Yourself Some Grace

One of the best things you can do is give yourself permission to feel whatever it is your feeling. Try not to fall prey to the belief that you have to feel a certain way or do certain things in order to make the holiday “normal.” If you feel angry, allow; yourself to vent some steam.

2. Be Kind to Yourself

It’s important that you get the rest and nourishment you need and try not to take on more than you can handle. If you need to be alone, then honor that. If you crave the company and affection of others, safely seek it out. Do whatever feels right to you during this difficult time.

3. Ask For and Accept Help

The holiday season is no time to feign strength and independence, when you’re grieving a death. You will need the help and support of others to get through, do don’t feel as if you are a burden. People generally receive satisfaction and even joy from helping those they care about.

After transition, people often desire to help but simply don't know how. If you need someone to help you prepare meals, shop, decorate, this is the time to speak up and make your needs known. Quite often, they will be delighted to feel like they are helping you in some way.

The same holds true for your emotional needs. Friends and family members might feel uncomfortable talking about your grief. They might think that you don't want to talk about it and don't want to be reminded of your pain.

The American Psychological Association (APA) notes that not talking about someone's death lead to isolation and discourage those who are there to support you. Again, you will have to tell your loved ones the best way that they can help you. If you want to talk about what you're going through, or you just need a shoulder to cry on, let them know.

4. Find Support

Sharing your feelings is often the best way to get through then and finding people you can talk to will help. Friends and relatives can be a great support during times of grief. However, they might be coping with their own feelings or so immersed in the holidays that they cannot offer the support you need.

Another good option is to connect to a Grief Support group. As is with our Grief Share ministry, many local churches, Community Centers, Funerals homes. Or Hospice groups make themselves available to fit your needs.

5. Make a Difference

Many people like to help others in large or small ways during the holiday season. We may drop our change in a charity basket, purchase a gift for a needy child, or donate to a favorite organization. This can help us feel like we are contributing to the greater good.

Likewise, helping improves the lives of others can help take focus off your loss. Studies show that volunteering can be beneficial to our mental health, particularly as we aged. During those challenging times of Covid-19 there are opportunities to find ways of creating ways to aid and assist. You can also find a way to help another family member or friend who may be in need. These acts can prove very rewarding and help in the healing process.

6. Stop Making Comparisons

It's easy to see other people or families enjoying holiday festivities and compare their experience to what you feel during this difficult time. This may make you feel worse or that you're lacking in some way.

Keep in mind that the holidays are stressful for most people and they are rarely the "magical" gatherings depicted on TV and in greeting cards, movies. Try to embrace what you have rather than compare it to what you think others have.

7. A Word From Verywell

As difficult as it seems, you will survive the holidays in one piece. Because of your grief, this holiday might prove to be a very difficult experience. However, you will get through it and come out on the other side stronger than before. You don't necessarily have to enjoy the holidays or even go through the motions of pretending to enjoy the festivities.

That said, it's also fine to have a good time in spite of your grief. If happiness slips through your window of grief, allow it to happen and enjoy it. You won't be doing your loved one an injustice by feeling joyous. The best gift you can give anyone you love is that of being true to yourself and living your life to the fullest, even as you adjust to the loss and remember your loved one.

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Part 2

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” Matthew 5:4

1. “When you feel forgotten”

So the Lord answers, “Can a woman forget her own baby and not love the child she bore? Even if a mother should forget her child, I will never forget you.” Isaiah 49:15

2. “When your family and friends are nowhere to be found”

“My father and mother may abandon me, but the Lord will take care of Me. Psalm27:10

3. “When you feel like everyone is happy but you”

“You will do everything you have promised; Lord; your love is eternal. Complete the work that you have begun. Psalm138:8

4. “When you can’t feel God’s presence”

If I flew away beyond the east or lived in the farthest part in the west, you would be there to lead me, you would be there to help me. Psalm 139”9-10

5. “When feel unloved”

“The mountains and hills may crumble but my love for you will never end; I will keep forever my promise of peace. “So says the Lord who loves you. Isaiah 54:10

6. “When you need to be reminded why Jesus was born”

A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, “Wonderful Counselor, “Mighty God, “Eternal Father” “Prince of Peace” Isaiah 9:6

Most of us realize that it is normal for those in mourning to feel great sadness and grief during the holidays. And we know that God can work through us to give brokenhearted encouragement and companionship. But if you are like most, you have asked yourself. “How can I give hope to the grieving during the holidays?”

The gift of listening

One of the most precious gifts is the simple act of listening. Just being there and listening is so important. Well-meaning people at times feel that they must do something, quote scriptures, or have the answers.

The gift of remembrance

It is encouraging for friends and family to talk about Holidays they once shared with the deceased and to recall good memories. Those who are grieving want to talk about the ones they’ve lost. They may even want to rehash some unpleasant details of an illness with a close friend or family member. Regardless, give them space to talk and let that be part of the holiday gathering. Galatians 6:2 “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

The gift of comforting with the comfort you were given

If you have experienced a loss similar to a grieving friend or relative, as God to give you the ability to comfort with the comfort you were given. The comfort God has given you is not only His loving ministry to you, it is His call to you to minister to others. You have experienced the pain of loss, but you have also begun to experience the comfort that only the Lord can give.

**“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction.
2 Corinthians 1:3-4a**

**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord. “Plans to prosper you and not to harm you plans to give you hope and a future.”
Jeremiah 29:11**

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