

IN TOUCH

HOSPICE OF THE VALLEY BEREAVEMENT NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

Getting through the Holidays

When your loved one dies, you grieve not only for the person, but also for the life you used to have, the love the person gave you and all the special times you spent together. Perhaps there is no time of the year when you're more aware of the empty space your dear one has left behind than during the holiday season.

Holidays can create feelings of dread and anxiety in those who are bereaved. The clichéd images of family togetherness and the often unrealistic expectations of a season filled with picture-perfect, joyful gatherings can cause tremendous stress for those who are not grieving, let alone for those in the midst of the painful, isolating experience of loss. Holidays by nature are filled with nostalgia and tradition, but in grief, even the happiest memories can hurt. When you're in the midst of pain, and the rest of the world wants to give thanks and celebrate, you need to find ways to manage your pain and get through the season with a minimum amount of stress.

SUGGESTIONS FOR COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS

Have a family meeting. List all the things you ordinarily do for the holidays (sending greeting cards, decorating the house, stringing outdoor lights, putting up a tree, holiday baking, entertaining business associates, buying something special to wear, going to parties, visiting friends, exchanging gifts, preparing a big meal, etc.) Decide together what's important to each of you, what you want to do this year, what you can let go of, and what you can do differently. For each task on the list, ask yourself these questions: Would the holidays be the holidays without doing this? Is this something I really want to do? Do I do it freely, or out of habit or tradition? Is it a one-person job, or can it be a group effort? Who is responsible for getting it done? Do I really like doing it?

Do some things differently this year. Trying to recreate the past may remind you all the more that your loved one is missing. This year, try celebrating the holidays in a totally different way. Nothing is the same as it used to be anyway. Go to a restaurant. Visit relatives or friends. Travel somewhere you've never gone before. If you decide to put up a tree, put it in a different location and make or buy different decorations for it. Hang a stocking in your loved one's memory, and ask each family member to express their

thoughts and feelings by writing a note to, from or about your loved one, and place the notes in that special stocking for everyone to read. Buy a poinsettia for your home as a living memorial to your loved one for the holiday season.

Do other things more simply. You don't have to discard all your old traditions forevermore, but you can choose to observe the holidays on a smaller scale this year.

Take good care of yourself. Build time in your day to relax, even if you're having trouble sleeping. Eat nourishing, healthy meals, and if you've lost your appetite, eat smaller portions more frequently throughout the day. (Sweet, sugary foods are everywhere, from Halloween until Easter, but too much sugar will deplete what little energy you have.) Get some daily exercise, even if it's just a walk around the block. Avoid drinking alcohol, which intensifies depression and disrupts normal sleep.

Just do it. We all know that we ought to think positively, eat right, exercise more and get enough rest—but grief by its very nature robs us of the energy we need to do all those good and healthy things. Accept that in spite of what we know, it's often very hard to do what's good for us—then do it anyway. Don't wait until you feel like doing it.

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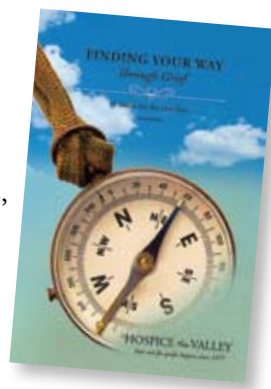
Pay attention to yourself. Notice what you're feeling and what it is you need. Feelings demand expression, and when we acknowledge them and let them out, they go away. Feelings that are "stuffed" don't go anywhere; they just fester and get worse. If you need help from others, don't expect them to read your mind. It's okay to ask for what you need. Besides, doing a favor for you during the holidays may make them feel better, too. Be patient and gentle with yourself, and with others, as well.

Expect to feel some pain. Plan on feeling sad at certain moments throughout the season, and let the feelings come. Experience the pain and tears, deal with them, then let them go. Have faith that you'll get through this and that you will survive.

Seek support from others. Grieving is hard work, and it shouldn't be done alone. You need to share your experience with someone who understands the pain of your loss. If your spouse, relative or friend cannot be the source of that support, you can find it elsewhere. See page 3 for a list of support groups sponsored by Hospice of the Valley.

Give something of yourself to others. As alone as you may feel in your grief, one of the most healing things you can do for yourself is to be with other people, especially during the holidays. Caring for and giving to others will nourish and sustain you, and help you to feel better about yourself. If you can bring yourself to do so, visit someone in a nursing home, or volunteer your time at your church or synagogue. Do whatever you can, and let it be enough.

This is an excerpt from the book, *Finding Your Way through Grief: A Guide for the First Year*, Second Edition, by Marty Tousley, CNS-BC, FT ©2008. If you would like a copy of the entire book, please call the Bereavement Office: 602.530.6970.



Bereavement Services

Hospice of the Valley provides bereavement support for 13 months following the death of your loved one. Support groups throughout the Valley, and grief counseling support are available. Information can be found at hov.org, or by calling 602.530.6970.

Our online grief discussion groups are monitored by professional grief counselors and are privately administered to ensure the highest level of quality, safety and security for participants. Membership is free and simply requires that visitors register with a username and password of their own choosing. (On the hov.org home page, click on "We Offer Various Forms of Grief Support." Scroll down until you see "On-Line Grief Healing Discussion Groups." Once at the site, click on "Register" next to the "Welcome Guest" greeting at the top of the page, and follow the instructions there.)

Also on our Web site, you can view previous issues of *Bereavement In Touch* newsletters, as well as other information, including social groups, writings by the bereaved, available books and other resources.

Holiday Workshops

COPING WITH THE HOLIDAYS WORKSHOP

Many bereaved persons have a very difficult time with the holiday season. Hospice of the Valley is offering special workshops to help you in coping with the holidays. The workshop is designed to enhance your ability to deal more effectively with your grief and to help promote a personal plan for facing the holidays. If you know of others in the community who would benefit, please tell them all are welcome. See the schedule on page 3. Questions? Contact the Bereavement Office: 602.530.6970.

May your holidays be filled with reasons to be thankful. Having loved and having been loved is perhaps the most wondrous reason of all.



Grief Support Groups (Adult Drop-In Groups, No Registration Needed)

APACHE JUNCTION

Horizon Bay
2080 S. Ironwood Dr.
Meets 2nd and 4th Monday
9–10:30 a.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/09

FOUNTAIN HILLS

Fountain Hills Senior Activity Center
13001 N. La Montana Dr.
Community Center
Meets 2nd and 4th Wednesday
10–11:30 a.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/11

GILBERT

Hospice of the Valley
3489 S. Mercy Rd., Suite 101
Meets 2nd and 4th Monday
6–7:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/09

GOODYEAR

Hampton Inn & Suites
2000 N. Litchfield Rd.
(North of McDowell Rd., next to Macaroni Grill)
Meets 2nd and 4th Monday
6–7:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/09

PHOENIX

Hospice of the Valley, Central Office
1510 E. Flower St.
Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday
6:30–8 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/05

The Stratford Assisted Living
1739 W. Myrtle Ave.
Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday
3–4:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/10

MESA

LGBT Community*
Hospice of the Valley East Office
777 W. Southern Ave., Suite 301
Meets 2nd and 4th Monday
6–7:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/09

* Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender Community

Hospice of the Valley East Office
777 W. Southern Ave., Suite 301
Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday
6–7:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/03

Fellowship Square
6945 E. Main St., Building 4
Meets 1st and 3rd Monday
1–2:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/02

NORTH PHOENIX

Paradise Valley Community Center
17402 N. 40th St.
Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday
6:30–8 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/03

PARADISE VALLEY

No Group 11/26 or 12/24
Valley Presbyterian Church
6947 E. McDonald Dr.
Circular Chapel (off McDonald)
Meets 2nd and 4th Thursday
6:30–8 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/12

PEORIA

Hospice of the Valley, West Office
9435 W. Peoria Ave. (*note new location*)
Meets 2nd and 4th Wednesday
2–3:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/11

Hospice of the Valley, West Office
9435 W. Peoria Ave. (*note new location*)
Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday
6–7:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/05

SCOTTSDALE

Scottsdale Senior Center
at Granite Reef
1700 N. Granite Reef Rd., Room 8
Meets 2nd and 4th Monday
1:30–3 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/09

Virginia G. Piper Center
10460 N. 92nd St.
Research Pavilion
1st Floor Group Room*
Meets 2nd and 4th Tuesday
3–4:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/10

* Note room change

SUN CITY

CIGNA Office Building
13041 N. Del Webb Blvd.
Classroom 2
Meets 1st and 3rd Monday
3–4:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/02

SUN LAKES

Sun Lakes United Methodist Church
9248 E. Riggs. Rd.
(North of Riggs Rd., 2 mi. East of I-10)
Meets 1st and 3rd Thursday
1–2:30 p.m.
Holiday Workshop 11/05

PET LOSS SUPPORT GROUP

Hospice of the Valley
Admin. Office
1510 E. Flower St.
Meets 1st Saturday each month
9–10:30 a.m.

If the date of a meeting falls on a national holiday, please call to check whether the meeting will take place.

For bereavement support, please call 602.530.6970



HOSPICE
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Save the Date



Light Up a Life

This annual remembrance event honors departed loved ones through a photo montage set to music. The event will be held at 6 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 22, at Steele Indian School Park, 300 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix.

If you would like to send a photo of your loved one, we are happy to include it in the tribute.

PHOTO SUBMISSION CRITERIA

We accept original and digital photos. We cannot accept computer-printed, photocopied, or cell phone photos. Minimum size is 2"x3", and if it is digital, it must be high-resolution. Deadline to receive photos is Nov. 10, 2009.

Original Photos

Please mail original photos to Hospice of the Valley, 1510 E. Flower St., Phoenix, AZ 85014. Include your name, phone number and/or e-mail address in case we need to contact you. If you want your photo returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Digital Photos

Please submit your high-resolution photos electronically through our Web site, www.hov.org/LUAL.

An estimated 1,500 people participated in last year's Light Up a Life event in the grassy amphitheater by the lake at Steele Indian School Park. Paper ornaments with space to write your loved one's name will be available for people to hang on trees, and illuminated necklaces will be distributed to guests. Light refreshments are provided.

Information: 602.530.6992 or LUAL@hov.org.