

Holiday Edition

HORIZON

Living with loss

A PUBLICATION OF HOSPICE OF THE PIEDMONT

SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS WITHOUT YOUR LOVED ONE

By Judi Burkhart, M. Ed.

Being without your loved one, although difficult during all times of the year, is especially stressful and sad during the holiday season. Holidays are a time of family reunions and traditions, exchanging gifts with friends, and other miscellaneous rituals that don't seem to mean much without your loved one.

Most people in grief wish they could somehow avoid this whole season. For many, the anticipation of the coming holidays is actually more difficult than the holiday itself. People often feel a lot of pressure from others to carry on all their formal traditions when they are not sure if they really want to. They may also feel guilty if they go about changing these family rituals and may even feel disloyal to the person who died.

Traditions do bind your family and friends in a special way, but changing your plans and traditions to meet your current needs makes a lot of sense. Your traditions may bring you a lot of comfort and pleasure. They may also magnify or intensify your loss. It is for you to decide if you want to make

some changes or not. Since your loved one's death, what felt right before may not feel right now.

Your own expectations can also cause you problems. Take care of yourself by making sure you are not demanding too much of yourself. Ask yourself, "Is this an activity or task I really enjoy?" And, "Would the holidays be the holidays without it?" You are unique! What worked for someone else may not feel right for you, so trust yourself.

Also, let your needs be known to your family, friends, and co-workers. Ask for and accept their help. Give yourself permission to be an active or inactive participant in holiday festivities, depending on your own feelings and energy level. Do not be afraid to change your mind at the last minute.

You and your family may want to take a family vacation with the money that is usually spent on gift-giving as a way to spend some special time together. It is important to include your loved one in the holiday through various memorials. For example, you may want to buy a small

live tree and plant it outside in the spring as a living memorial to your loved one. Or, you may want to create a special ornament or wreath for your loved one. Also, leave a photo album (with pictures of your loved one) open on your coffee table. Everyone is missing and thinking about him or her. The pictures give them permission to share their thoughts, feelings, and memories. Each of these memorials is a way to say to your loved one, "I miss you and you will not be forgotten."

Remember, during the holidays take care of yourself by planning and allowing yourself to make some changes if you choose. Remember, too, that you do not have to prove how much you miss your loved one by being totally miserable. Allow yourself to feel all your feelings, including happy moments, during the holiday season.

If you would like to learn more about coping during the holidays, call Hospice of the Piedmont or attend our four week Holiday Grief Support Group. See the Bereavement Calendar for details.

GIFTS FROM A BROKEN HEART

by Laurie Haan Bayma, MS RN
Hospice of the Piedmont Bereavement Coordinator

A variety of events or stresses can lead someone to either look forward to or conversely dread the holiday season. If one were to create two columns that were titled “looking forward to...” and “dreading...” it may even be possible that the same events/celebrations could turn up in both columns. Some of these events might be: visiting family, traveling to see friends/relatives, giving gifts, receiving gifts, making dinners and desserts, shopping, preparing the home for guests and remembering past holidays.

Indeed, those who are at least somewhat leery of the approaching holidays because of a recent loss are not alone. With thousands of Americans serving in the Armed Forces in Iraq and other dangerous areas, or displaced by natural disasters, many families are living day to day not knowing how their loved one is doing or even where they are. With the high divorce rate, many families are either not together “as they once were,” or having to divide their time between households. With our nation's current economic situation the way it is, many people are struggling

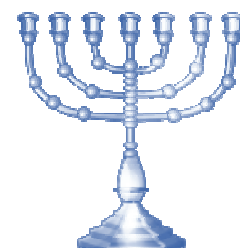
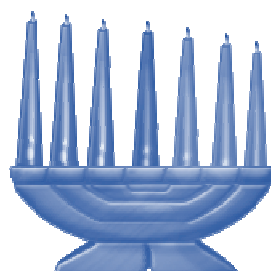
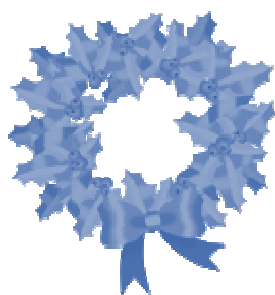
to make ends meet, facing loss of employment, losing homes or some combination of all these.

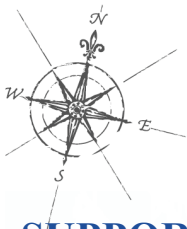
These are difficult times, but they are accompanied by opportunities. Now, the ability to see opportunities when one is grieving can vary largely depending upon where one is in the grief process. For those who are in the early stages of the grief process and the experience of the loss is intense, there might not be room to see beyond the pain at this time. There may be no energy or time left to see opportunities. These experiences are normal, but know that there will be a time in the future when the pain will lessen to make room for hope and new opportunities.

For those who are further along in the grief process, thinking of doing something different this year may be ideal. This holiday season could offer an opportunity for gifts “of the heart” that ultimately fill a place in a broken heart. Reaching out to someone who is lonely or stressed financially may help just a little to add some light to what may seem a dark holiday season.

Volunteering for an organization that reaches out to the needy may be just the thing for the grieving heart. This grieving heart may need a reason to get out of the house, may need respite from thoughts of worry and loss, and may need an opportunity to focus on something outside the self. Letter writing and gift giving for service men and women could also be done right from home, as could knitting hats or blankets for premature infants, or making telephone calls to homebound individuals. There are endless organizations needing extra help around the holidays. Local newspapers and your Chamber of Commerce can also be a great assistance in finding places that need volunteers.

The main goal of any of these activities would be to give help to someone who is living and suffering. The resulting “gifts” from this generous offer of help could come in many sizes and shapes, not the least of which would be taking a needed and well-deserved break from grieving and feeling the pain in one's own heart. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.”





BEREAVEMENT CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUPPORT GROUPS FOR ADULTS

Holiday Grief Support Groups

Tuesdays, 6:00 – 7:30pm

November 18th & 25th and December 2nd & 16th

The holiday season is a time that some find particularly difficult after the loss of a loved one. The Hospice of the Piedmont is offering a four week series of group sessions, designed to provide support to adults and provide opportunities for participants to connect with others who are grieving during the holiday season. Registration preferred.

11/18: Holiday Grief Survival Guide

11/25: Traditions: Keeping the Old or Creating New

12/2: Honoring the Memory of Loved Ones

12/16: Looking Toward a New Year

General Loss Support Group for Adults

Mondays, 12:00 – 1:30pm

January 12 – March 2

Meet for 8 consecutive weeks to learn about the grieving process and be with others who are grieving. These groups are for adults who have experienced the death of a loved one and 3 months have passed since the death.

Registration required.

JOURNEYS GRIEF GROUPS FOR CHILDREN AND TEENS

Children and teens receive support and grief education and use art as a tool for creative expression. Please call the Journeys Program at the Hospice of the Piedmont for program location and to register.

School-aged groups: *Tuesdays, 5:00–6:15pm*
(ages 7-12 years old)

Teen groups: *Thursdays, 5:00–6:30pm*
(ages 13-17 years old)

Parent groups: Occur simultaneously on both evenings.

**NEW JOURNEYS GRIEF SUPPORT GROUPS FOR
CHILDREN AND TEENS ARE STARTING SOON.
PLEASE CALL FOR DETAILS.**

GRIEF WORKSHOP SERIES

Beginning Your Grief Journey Workshop

The First Wednesday of the Month, 6:00–8:00pm

Join us for an evening of education and sharing for the newly bereaved. We will introduce you to basic grief concepts and provide time to begin to share the story of your loss in a group setting.

Registration preferred.

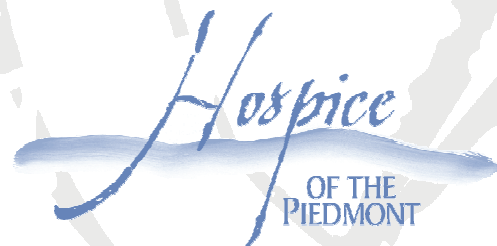
THE HOSPICE TREE: A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

Tuesday, December 9, 6:30pm

First Presbyterian Church
500 Park Street
Charlottesville, Virginia

We invite you to join us for our annual memorial service and fundraiser where you will have the opportunity to “light a light” on the Hospice Tree to commemorate and celebrate the lives of loved ones lost as well as the lives of those still living.

Please call for more information.



**OUR GROUPS AND WORKSHOPS ARE FREE
AND OPEN TO ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

434-817-6900 • 800-975-5501

WWW.HOPVA.ORG

**PLEASE CALL FOR DIRECTIONS AND
LOCATIONS FOR ALL EVENTS.**

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Bereavement Support
Groups are open to the
community and free of
charge. Please see the
Bereavement Calendar
or call the Bereavement
Department for further
information and to
register: 434-817-6900
or 800-975-5501



*Tuesday, December 9,
6:30pm*

First Presbyterian Church
500 Park Street
Charlottesville, Virginia

We invite you to "light a light" to commemorate and celebrate the lives of those you wish to remember. The tree will be lit at the Hospice Tree ceremony and will stay lit until the New Year begins. Help us make the 2008 Hospice Tree the brightest ever by making a \$10 donation in the memory of your loved one.

Please call 434-817-6900 or visit our website www.hopva.org to make you donation.

We hope you will plan to join us for the lighting of the tree, an opportunity for Hospice Staff and volunteers to remember the patients and families with whom we have shared life's final journey.

Gifts must be received by November 21st to be acknowledged in the printed program.