



IN TOUCH

Bereavement Newsletter

Bereavement Department (602) 530-6970 or hov.org

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024

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

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GETTING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS *(continued)*

the block. Avoid drinking alcohol, which intensifies depression and disrupts normal sleep.

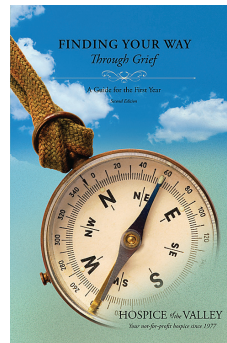
Just do it. We all know that we ought to think positively, eat right, exercise more and get enough rest—but grief by its very nature robs us of the energy we need to do all those good and healthy things. Accept that in spite of what we know, it's often very hard to do what's good for us—then do it anyway.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

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, CNSBC, FT, DCC.

If you would like to purchase a copy of this book (\$12), visit <https://hov.org/news/> and click on the “Online Store” link at the bottom of the page.

Community Day of Remembrance

New Song Center, Ryan House and Phoenix Children's invite your children and family to an in-person gathering to remember and honor your loved one. Enjoy special arts and crafts, beautiful music and a meaningful remembrance ceremony.

Sunday, Nov. 17, from 2–3 p.m.
Steele Indian School Park Ramadas
300 E. Indian School Road, Phoenix
RSVP RSVP2@newsongcenter.org

Light Up a Life

This annual remembrance event honors departed loved ones through a photo montage set to music. Watch this beautiful tribute video from the comfort of home.

CW 7 Arizona
Sunday, Nov. 24, 2024
5–6 p.m.

Available for future viewing at:
cw7az.com/LightUpaLife



Healing from Loss

Hospice of the Valley provides compassionate support to people who are grieving the loss of a loved one. We provide extensive resources to help families as they work toward healing.

Grief support resources

Helpful videos, handouts and information about bereavement events.

Grief support groups

In-person and virtual group sessions are offered Valleywide at no cost.

For the latest information, visit hov.org/our-care/grief-support or call (602) 530-6970



New Song Center

For family grief support that is tailored to parents, young adults, teens and children.

Visit:

hov.org/our-care/grief-support/new-song-center-for-grieving-children





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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bereavement services

Hospice of the Valley provides bereavement support for up to 13 months following the death of your loved one. Virtual support groups and telephonic or virtual grief counseling support are available. Information can be found at hov.org/grief-support-groups, or by calling (602) 530-6970.

Grief support for newly bereaved

Virtual group beginning Jan. 8, 2025

Meets the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays
4:30–6 p.m.
Jan.–June 2025

Registration required. Spaces limited.
Call (602) 636-5390 for information.

New Song Center for Grieving Children

New Song Center for Grieving Children, a program of Hospice of the Valley, provides grief support groups for children, youth, young adults, and adults. Support groups are currently being offered in person for all age groups in Peoria, Gilbert, Scottsdale, and Central and North Phoenix, at no cost to participants.

“Enduring Ties” is an evening support group for families who have experienced the death of a minor child.

“Luz del Corazón” is a support group program for families whose first language is Spanish and who have experienced any type of loss through death.

New Song Center provides one-on-one counseling for brothers and sisters grieving the death of a sibling and for young children following the death of a parent.

For more information, call (480) 951-8985 or (602) 776-6789 (Spanish), email info@newsongcenter.org or view newsongcenter.org.