

Giving Hope

Favourite quotes or expressions:

• "There is sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are messengers of overwhelming grief ... and unspeakable love."
~ Washington Irving
(American Writer)

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By Janelle Breese Biagioni
www.soulwriter.com

Grief at Christmas

Christmas is my favourite time of year! However, the year my husband died, facing Christmas without him seemed unbearable. I wanted to travel to some foreign land where Christmas was not celebrated – if there was such a place!

In contrast to my desire to skip over the holidays, my children were bubbling with excitement. Yes, they missed their father and they were very much

aware that he would not be with us on Christmas Day. Nonetheless, they pushed me into decorating the house, getting a tree and planning the traditional turkey dinner.

I feared the day would be consumed with sadness, and that this huge void would overpower us, leaving the day filled with tears.

As a family we decided to set aside Christmas Eve

as the day to remember my husband. We went to the cemetery. We shared stories about their dad and the family we had been. We talked about the new family that we had become. And, we cried. Although the day was difficult, it was also very healing.

In acknowledging our loss the day before Christmas, we were able to go on and enjoy the festivities – albeit in a different way!

Remembering a Loved One

Remembering our loved ones during the holidays can bring forth tears. However, it can also bring forth warm memories as our friends and family share their stories and memories of our loved one with us.

Here are some suggestions for remembering your loved one and to help you get through the holidays:

- ♥ Do something that you did together
- ♥ Write a letter to your loved one

- ♥ Talk about them
- ♥ Create a memory album complete with pictures, stories and memorabilia
- ♥ Gift a gift to charity in their name
- ♥ Cook your loved one's favourite food
- ♥ Hang their picture in the Christmas tree
- ♥ Watch a movie that was a favorite for the entire family
- ♥ Visit a place you enjoyed as a family
- ♥ Try something new and spontaneous in their honor
- ♥ Develop a new tradition
- ♥ Ceremoniously handover a tradition that your loved one performed. For example, if Dad carved the turkey turn the duty over to the first-born child
- ♥ Allow for sadness
- ♥ Pamper yourself
- ♥ Know your limitations
- ♥ Let yourself laugh!

Bereaved Children & the Holidays



“...Daddy’s gone, but Christmas must go on ... the little ones need the memories.” This is part of a song that I heard the year my husband died and it helped me to understand how my children could teem with enthusiasm for the holidays in spite of our sorrow.

Grieving children have a natural rhythm to their mourning. They allow

themselves to feel the pain and cry for their loss, but they also give themselves permission to laugh, to enjoy food, play with a friend or go to a movie. Children understand on a very intuitive level that grieving and mourning are easier to manage when done in ‘bite-size’ chunks.

This Christmas, if you are grieving the loss of a loved one, allow yourself

to be more child-like – not in the sense of regressing, but in the sense of allowing yourself to enjoy the memories and your family and friends without guilt or shame.

Think about your loved one who died. *Did they live their life right to the end? And would they want you to live your life as fully as possible until the day you die?* I think they would. Give yourself this gift – the permission to live!

“The pain of parting is nothing to the joy of meeting again.”

~Charles Dickens

Self-Care (Part Two)

Dr. Alan Wolfelt teaches grief has a profound affect on us physically, emotionally, socially and spiritually. In the last newsletter, we discussed the physical effects. This issue explores the following:

Emotionally – the wave-like emotions that wash over us in grief can be debilitating. In fact, it’s like riding a runaway train. The responses are not predictable or orderly so

don’t expect those who have been bereaved to ‘get a grip’ or ‘let go’ of their sadness. It takes time. Allow feelings of sadness to be expressed in safe, appropriate ways.

Socially – bereavement creates social discomfort. Family, friends and co-workers can withdraw from our pain. The bereaved person may also isolate themselves. When supporting a person who is grieving, allow them to teach you how much

social interaction they can tolerate given their feelings of sorrow.

Spiritually – grief sends us on a search for meaning. People may question their faith, embrace their faith or even turn from their faith. Be supportive and allow them freedom to explore their spirituality without feeling condemned or challenged. Acceptance and unconditional support are the gifts you can give!

World Gathering on Bereavement

Come to Vancouver, British Columbia!

Some of the best keynote speakers in the world will attend the World Gathering on Bereavement from August 17 – 21, 2005. In addition, The

Compassionate Friends will be holding their 4th International Gathering as part of the World Gathering. Their workshops will address grief following the death of a child.

Dr. Alan Wolfelt, Earl Grollman and Darcie Sims

are just some of the scheduled speakers. I am honored to announce I have been accepted to host a workshop on Extraordinary Grief.

For more info, visit www.worldgathering.org.

I hope to see you there!



“Pacific Dogwood”
British Columbia’s
Provincial Flower