

Holiday Bereavement  
Newsletter



# Hospice Caring Connections

## We Remember Them from the “*Gates of Prayer*”

*In the rising sun and in its  
going down,*

*We remember them.*

*In the blowing of the wind  
and in the chill of winter,*

*We remember them.*

*In the rustling of leaves and  
the beauty of autumn,*

*We remember them.*

*When we are lost and sick at  
heart,*

*We remember them.*

*When we have joys we yearn  
to share;*

*We remember them.*

*So long as we live, they too  
shall live, for they are now a  
part of us*

*We remember them.*

## *Preparing for the Holidays*

The holiday season is upon us. At Hospice, we are aware that while holidays can bring joy and excitement for many people, others find special occasions bring sad memories and difficult times.

Because love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief. It may seem at these times that your grief has overwhelmed you again.

Even before the holiday begins, you may find you have an upsurge in the thoughts and feelings associated with your grief.

Remember, holidays won't always be so difficult. There will come a time when special occasions and the memories they bring will not be as painful.

While nothing can ever take away the hurt you feel, we hope the tips in this newsletter will help you cope with holidays.

If you are feeling up to it, please join us at our Annual Memorial Service. This special non-denominational service is dedicated to remembering your loved ones and celebrating their life. Call Hospice at 632-5593 to find out the dates for our annual service.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this holiday season. We wish you and your family all the best.

***The Staff and Volunteers  
of Hospice***

## Hospice Grief Support Services

- Monthly phone support
- Spring and Fall 7-Week Grief Support Groups
- Annual Memorial Service
- Library of books & videos for loan

## The Holidays With You



*I planned to spend the holidays without you.*

*I went through my recipes and remembered how we planned holiday dinners together. We always said we weren't going to prepare as many dishes as last year—and then we always prepared just as many.*

*I got out the Christmas decorations and unwrapped our treetop angel.*

*You gave her to me our first Christmas together. It seemed that each ornament and decoration held a memory of you, and I smiled as I looked through our treasures.*

*I went Christmas shopping and remembered how we enjoyed finding the perfect gift for each person on our list. We liked to wait and shop during the Christmas rush, so we*

*could enjoy the feel of the holidays.*

*As I wrapped the gifts, I remembered how you wrapped the packages and I tied the ribbons. We were a good team.*

*I attended parties and dinners and thought about your gift for making people laugh. You wanted everyone to have a good time whether it was a family dinner, a church party or a get-together with friends.*

*I planned to spend the holidays without you, but everywhere I turned you were with me though a special memory. I'm glad I didn't have to spend the holidays without you.*

By Rhonda Wilson of Asheboro, North Carolina—Bereavement Magazine  
November/December 2003  
[www.bereavementmagazine.com](http://www.bereavementmagazine.com)

*“Keep each holiday as a reminder of all the things you shared with the person you loved.”*

*“Remembering is part of the healing.”*

### *Grieving As A Family*

Courtesy of Victoria Hospice Society—[www.victoriahospice.com](http://www.victoriahospice.com)

Through times of loss and grief, communication is the key to coping and growing as a family. It is important to be together, to talk, to be silent and to share feelings.

Each individual will grieve in their own particular way and at their own pace, so it is important to respect each family member's way of handling their grief. Some people grieve privately, others openly...some grieve by talking, others by doing...and others by a combination of styles.

♥ Although you may be focused on the death of one family member, remember that remaining family members continue to need your time, attention and love.

♥ Set aside time to be “alone together” as a family. Plan a project or trip.

♥ Make sure the person who has died continues to be part of family conversations.

♥ Talk together about how you will handle special occasions like anniversaries, birthdays and holidays.

## *Coping with Special Days*

*Adapted from Edmonton Palliative Care Program - Archives December 1996, by Paula Brindley, Coordinator of Palliative Care*

There are certain dates that hold special significance and are associated with our loved ones who have died. We can expect painful and “old” feelings to be stirred up at those times.

Coping with holidays, particularly Christmas, and special dates such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. can be difficult and painful. Although you cannot change your current situation, you can change the way you approach the holidays and other special days that will help you cope.

- Make note of special days and holidays and plan ahead. It will put you in charge of the grief that may be associated with the special day or holiday. Choose how you want to spend the special day and let others know your plans.
- If you plan to spend time with family and friends, choose only those you feel comfortable with.
- Consider a grief ritual. Hold a special ceremony, light a special candle or plant a tree, etc. This will help you pay tribute to your loved one and put you in charge of the grief experience associated with the holiday or special date.
- Create a memory box of your loved one and put things in it like pictures, special gifts, stories, poems, music, etc. that help everyone remember favourite things or special attributes of your loved one. This box can be taken out and its contents examined at other meaningful intervals.
- Modify your holiday traditions if you feel you don't have the time or energy to continue past traditions. If shopping is too difficult, try gift certificates, send flowers, catalogue order or give gifts a miss this year. Elect to do something completely different, if that seems helpful. Pass up writing cards, baking, trimming the tree, etc. Or, create a new tradition that is rewarding and has meaning to you.
- When making plans, include time for yourself. Set limits for yourself. Eat well, get enough sleep and get exercise. You will need to take care of yourself in order to maintain the energy necessary to cope.
- Avoid excessive food, alcohol or drugs. This can make you depressed.
- Be good to yourself. Allow yourself time to think about the holidays and special dates and realize that they will have both happy and sad moments.
- Don't set unrealistic expectations. That way you may find that it works out better than expected.
- Balance the time you spend with others with some time alone. Both are important. Solitude can refresh you and be a sort of tonic. It provides you with time and space to think about how well you are doing, given the difficult circumstances right now.
- Remind yourself that you don't have to carry the burden of the holidays or special days alone. If you find the stress and anxiety too overwhelming, reach out for help. Find someone you trust and ask them to listen to you.

# Supporting Children Through the Holidays

Condensed from  
"Helping Grieving Children  
Handle the Holidays" by  
Ralph Klicker.

Courtesy of Victoria  
Hospice Society  
www.victoriahospice.co



Holidays without someone we love is just as painful for children as it is for adults.

The first holiday may be the most challenging. Not knowing what it will be like without a loved one can be a source of great anxiety for children of all ages.

Regardless of their sorrow, children cling to the anticipation of these special times of year and often yearn for some of the magic to be retained.

Children gain comfort from routine, so maintaining some family traditions is a good idea. A family tradition does not have to be celebrated exactly as it always was—modified traditions can still be meaningful.

Here are some suggestions for including children in holiday planning and creating their own memories:

- ♥ Encourage children to do something for others; this can give special meaning to this time.
  - ♥ Create a new family tradition together.
  - ♥ Encourage children to write a note or draw a picture for the person who died. This can be kept, taken to the cemetery, launched "ceremoniously" on a piece of driftwood or burned and sprinkled somewhere meaningful.
  - ♥ Make a small gift in honour of the person.
  - ♥ Start a memory scrapbook that anyone can add to at anytime.
  - ♥ Encourage sharing stories and memories. Tears can lead to hugs, laughter and meaningful acknowledgement of the loved one.
  - ♥ Take children to a craft or holiday program.
  - ♥ Let children know that whatever they are feeling is okay and that in families people do not always feel the same way at the same time.
  - ♥ Practice self-care to ensure enough energy for the children and yourself; accept help from others to do things with your children when your energy falls.
- ♥ Ask each child what he or she would find most comforting and meaningful.
  - ♥ Be honest about your own grief and discuss your needs as well as theirs.
  - ♥ Make concrete plans together; knowing what to expect can relieve anxiety for all.

*"It's possible to be happy for the children even when struggling to find happiness oneself."*

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