

Maximum Living Newsletter

“Dedicated To Our Families As They Take The Grief Journey”

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The Importance of the Candle Ritual

by John D. Canine, Ed.D., Ph.D.

Grief at best is an unpleasant journey. It takes a lot of time, energy, and patience. It is a trip we all try to avoid, but at sometime in our life a trip we all must take.

Sometimes it is difficult to believe you will ever feel better or be able to move forward with your life. It is important to begin to think of the idea of grief as an open-ended process. When one has experienced the loss of someone, it is clear their life is forever-changed by the loss. How are you making changes in your life to adjust to your new way of life?

What you may choose to help you get through this day may not be the same choice you make a month from now. Your process is also forever-changing as you go on with life and attempt to deal with the loss.

To wonder, “Is grief ever finished?” is similar to asking someone, “How high is up?” It is very easy

to miss the movement you are making in the process of your own grief because it may seem small in comparison to the great pain you are feeling.

Grief comes in many forms, the most difficult is the death of a significant other.

Thoughts that can help you when you are grieving:

- Tell yourself you are okay and focus on your good traits.
- Avoid thoughts that begin with “if only.”
- Tell yourself you will get better.
- Talk about your loved one’s death (tell the story).
- Understand that the healing process includes progress and setbacks.
- Live one day at a time.
- Understand and express your feelings.
- Exercise and eat nutritious foods.



Light a candle while looking at your loved ones picture.

- Be open to new experiences.
- Light a candle while looking at your loved one’s picture.

This last one is so important. Grief is best expressed through rituals. Lighting a candle gives you permission to sit down, look at a picture, think about your loved one and have a good cry! You may sit there for five minutes or two hours.

No matter, it is in our best interest to have these appointed times of grief. It enables you to actualize your loss, express your emotions, and pay your respects. And, most importantly, when you are finished and you blow the candle out...you are giving yourself permission to go on with your life...until the next time you light a candle. Your loved one would want it that way.

This holiday season, light your candle many times!

Dr. John D. Canine is an Author, Educator, Grief Psychotherapist and President of Maximum Living Consultants in Clarkston, MI

Courage To Get Out of Bed

In her article, “Finding Courage In Your Fears,” Nan Zastrow writes:

After the loss of a loved one, it takes courage to face the day, to get out of bed, to believe that life can ever be “good” again. We are challenged by purpose. We find difficulty enjoying the things we once enjoyed. We are disoriented, wishing someone could take us by the hand, lead us around and tell us exactly what we have to do through the day.

Her thoughts strike a chord, even as our daylight hours get shorter, the weather changes—again— and we identify with other species who have the good sense to hibernate at this time of year. She also writes:

Social times unthinkable

Social occasions for many bereaved are unthinkable, especially in the grieving process....Will people ask me questions I’m afraid to answer? Will I be so emotional that I can’t speak? What will people think of me if I laugh? Do I have the right to shed my cloak of grief? These people were my friends before, will they still be my friends now?

The Holiday season is a social time. We may need to both be with family and friends, and to

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spend some solitary time reflecting on times we spent with our loved one and ways our lives are changing now that the person is no longer here.

Be gentle with yourself. Holiday activities may intensely involve all the senses, with sights (holiday lights and the glitter in the malls), sounds (concerts, caroling, conversations with old friends), smells (bread baking, turkey roasting), tastes (cookies, punch, a hearty stew), and touch (hugs from grandkids, or old friends).

If curling up at home with a cup of hot chocolate or a piece of leftover pie appears as a good option for the moment, do it!!



Nan's article appears in [Grief Digest](#), April 2006.



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Storytelling: Passing Along Memories, Legacies of Your Family and Loved Ones

by Shirley A. Brogan, LPC

“Grammy, tell me a story,” says young Lucy as she sits with her grandmother in the soft glow of the fireplace light. “Story? I just told you a story,” says Grandma. “Remember, the one about the red and gold sled?” “Tell me another,” Lucy says, persistently, grabbing her teddy bear. “Let’s see,” Grandma says, tapping her fingers. “Once, when I was a little girl we had a pony named...”

Children love stories, and a great resource for good stories is the family. Happy stories make us feel closer as we laugh together; sad stories help us know who we are as a family. Those of us with a few years on us are the keepers of the stories, says Rev. Tim Schroeder. We are also the tellers of the stories.

Stories form the legacies of tradition and values

Rev. Schroeder writes: So many young people move from adolescence into adulthood adrift. They don’t know who they are, where they are going, what is important or what it all means. They have not heard the stories that can make them laugh, make them feel that they belong, help them know they are part of a family. The stories help form the legacies of tradition and values from which they make choices in their own lives.

Holiday time is a great opportunity for stories. Families and old friends come together, and their conversations are about “catching up” and remembering. Often, gatherings include children, teens and adults, and as talk moves to “old times”, stories inadvertently get passed on to a younger generation of future story tellers.



Stories help us know who we are as a family.

If this is a first Holiday without a loved one, we may be reluctant to tell stories that include the person who died. We may believe we can avoid the hurt and sadness of missing him or her.

Yet, how can we share in the family stories and not include those who have died? People on a journey through grief speak of the pain of NOT feeling free to talk about a recently deceased loved one.

What are some things families and friends can do to bring story-telling into Holiday activities? How about:

- ◆ Invite family and friends to bring a memento, or special item, that came from, or brings to mind an incident from the past. Encourage them to “tell the STORY” that goes with the item. Often others in the group were present, too, and have additions, or maybe embellishments, to the tale.

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Grief Resource Center

For Additional Resources, please visit the [GRIEF RESOURCE CENTER](http://www.maximumlivingconsult.com) at: www.maximumlivingconsult.com

SUGGESTED HOLIDAY READINGS

How Will I Get Through The Holidays? Twelve Ideas for Those Whose Loved One Has Died.

by James Miller. Ft. Wayne, IN: Willowgreen Publishing.

Holiday Blues-A Self-Help Manual on Grief through the Holidays. by Dr. Clarence Tucker & Dr. Cliff Davis (order through Centering Corporation, 402-533-1200)

Getting Past Christmas: Holiday Help.

by Carlene Enroth (order through Centering Corporation)

A Decembered Grief: Living with Loss While Others Are Celebrating by Harold Ivan Smith. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf. by Leo Buscaglia. New Jersey: Slack Press.

Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul by J. Canfield. Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications.

Christmas Therapy by Karen Katafiasz. St. Meinrad, IN: Abbey Press.

Storytelling...

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- ◆ Have on hand scrapbooks, or boxes of old photographs. We all have boxes of photographs we always meant to organize and label. Invite family and friends to help identify people in the pictures, and tell the STORIES!!
- ◆ Make a 2006 Holiday Time Capsule. Invite people to contribute ornaments, wrapping paper, gift cards, greeting cards, drawings, religious service or school programs, and STORIES, accounts of what you did. List events of the year, births, graduations, weddings, deaths, any special times.
- ◆ Do a "This is Your Life" skit for the family matriarch or patriarch. Impromptu or planned, with costumes and props, or just STORYTELLING.
- ◆ Have a baking or meal-preparation gathering featuring old family recipes. Tell the STORIES about when Grandma made...
- ◆ Hang a stocking, or prepare a "mail box" for the person who died, and invite people to write to him or her. Sometimes people write how much they miss the person; other times they will want to tell them what is going on now in their own lives. Decide together what you want to do with the letters.

ORGANIZATIONS FOR SUPPORT

Compassionate Friends for Bereaved Parents

P.O. Box 3696 • Oak Brook, IL 60522 • 630-990-0010
www.compassionatefriends.org

Widowed Persons

1909 K Street, NW • Washington, DC 20049
WidowNet: www.fortnet.org/WidowNet

WEBSITES WORTH SURFIN'

Centering Corporation - www.centering.org

Willowgreen-(James E. Miller)- willowgreen.com

Grief Recovery - www.grief.net

Journey of Hearts - www.journeyofhearts.org

Remembering a Special Friend at Holiday Time



A few years ago, there was a group of folks gathered at a Holiday Candle Lighting Ceremony on a chilly December evening. It was a good size group, more than one hundred, and they were invited, each one, to say out loud the name of the loved one they were honoring. There were soft voices and tears as the names were spoken—names of spouses, parents, children and other people who had died.

Then, one woman spoke: "Also, this month my dog, Maggie, died. We had her for 12 years." There was a sound that traveled the room, an "aw-w-w-e," and after she spoke, others began including the name of a pet who had also died. She had given them permission to speak about a special loved one, and a loss others might not believe is important.

Many of us have had a pet that has had a special impact on our lives. Many pets are considered members of the family. At Holiday times, they get presents, have stockings hung by the fireplace, ornaments on a tree. When a pet dies, our Holiday without that special friend can be difficult.

Ways to remember and honor a pet include:

- Planting a tree or perennial plant.
- Giving supplies to a local shelter or pet adoption agency.
- Donating to a service-dog training program, such as Leader Dog for the Blind, Paws for a Cause, or programs like the Morris Foundation, Cornell Feline Health Center, or veterinary schools to help with animal research.

These activities permit us to honor the love our pets gave to us, and provide our pets with a legacy to pass on.

Maximum Living Support Groups

The purpose of the Support Group is to come together and draw strength and support from each other during this time of loss. The meetings are part of the community outreach program of our Funeral Home and are available at no charge. Please feel free to attend and know that your friends and family members are always welcome.

The following Support Group is available in your area, for a complete listing, please go to: www.maximumlivingconsult.com

A grief shared is halved, a joy shared is doubled.