

GRIEF AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

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The holidays can be a very hard time when you have lost a loved one. However, the days following oftentimes can be harder than the holidays themselves. It is similar to the time following a funeral. When the ceremony is over and everyone goes home you can be faced with the reality of isolation and a new lifestyle. Being aware that this time may be difficult can help you take care of yourself and plan for its possibility.

Many people have told me that it is helpful to plan a project for the New Year. Some have sorted through their loved ones belongings, written thank you notes or taken care of neglected paperwork. This allows for tender moments of reconnecting with their loved one in their hearts as well as a feeling of accomplishment in organizing their lives.

Others have found security in projects that connect them with the future. Repairs or renovations to the home, new volunteer projects or beginning a job hunt signifies that life will go on and can create hope for the future. Also, helping others can also be very gratifying when you are not sure of your own significance now that your loved one is gone.

Taking care of your physical well-being is important during stressful times, but it is also imperative during those “let down” times as well. If you are feeling lost now that the holidays are over, it can be easy to lose track of your own physical needs. It is important for you to remember to drink lots of water, eat at least small meals every day and get some form of exercise, even if it is just walking around the block. Sleep may be hard if you are grieving, so don’t limit yourself to sleeping at night only. Sleep whenever you feel tired, even if it is short catnaps during the day.

Some researchers believe that 60 percent of your energy is used for grieving. Don’t be surprised if you are tired all the time and have difficulty focusing on tasks at hand. It is a part of the process. Prioritizing what you want to accomplish each day and letting people know that you are taking a break from some activities can help you and others clarify your expectations.

Evenings and mealtimes can be difficult after the holiday celebrations have passed. These are often the loneliest parts of the day. Arranging dinner with friends is an easy way to keep from being lonely, and most close friends would want to know they could help in this way. I know one man who has a list of friends that have reassured him that they want him to call when he needs company for dinner.

The end of the holiday season is just as tender as the beginning. It symbolizes the “moving on” of life. Balance is an important word to remember as you travel through the process of grief. Take time for yourself to remember and let your feelings flow. There are some aspects of grief that you can experience only when alone. These can be very

powerful moments in which you eventually begin to feel the presence of your loved one in your heart. But also take time to be with others. It is through your connection with the world that the memory of your loved one can live on.