

Grief Notes

November 2020

“Holidays this year will be different” by Linda Hopkins, Bereavement Coordinator

In ordinary times, holidays are days when the absence of a loved one is deeply felt. When grieving, the whole season is difficult as we feel out of step with the rest of the world that appears to be cheerfully moving on. We worry how we will get through the days. We worry we will disappoint our friends and family with our sadness. This year, due to the corona virus, we approach the holidays as uncharted territory. Will we feel safe to visit with family as we ordinarily would have? We may find ourselves missing not only the person who has died but also the family and friends with whom we would have gathered.



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fewer obligations can bring relief and may even be necessary as grief drains one of so much physical and emotional energy. Many of us have of necessity become used to online shopping and will use it more this year. There will be a particular sadness this year as many family members will not be able to be present as coming from far away and perhaps even from nearby will be limited by pandemic concerns. Some families have been quite successful with online gatherings. While not at all the same as gathering in person, they can provide some comfort as we explore ways to be there for one another. Old-fashioned connections with cards and calls will continue to connect us.

As with so much of what happens at holiday time when one is grieving, the time will be bittersweet. May you be blessed with having a holiday that is meaningful for you even with your grief.

The first holidays without a loved one are challenging. People often find the days of anticipation are more difficult than the holiday itself. At Thanksgiving, will you speak of the one who has died, or will there be “an elephant in the room?” People handle this in many ways. Some share what they are thankful for including memories of the loved one who is gone. Some set a place with a photo and candle to light in honor of the deceased and include them in this way at the table. Some make a point of saying the name thus allowing themselves to speak of the person and perhaps by example letting others become comfortable to remember out loud and together without fear of “making someone sad.”

This year, there will be many families with changes in their celebrations forced by circumstance. Even before the pandemic, families have found that planning for holidays after the death of a loved one caused a rethinking of how to celebrate. Choosing less pressure with less shopping, less busyness, less cooking, and