

LIFT

Grief is a process, not a state. –Anne Grant

December 2021
Bereavement Newsletter

Living Is For Today
West Texas Rehab's Hospice of San Angelo

The holiday season is full of rituals, special traditions and activities, and part of our grief is that our loved one isn't here to participate in those traditions. It's tempting to want to shut out the holidays and wake up mid-January. However, part of our healing actually comes from intentionally remembering our loved ones – during the holidays - and finding new ways of including them in rituals and events. Hospice of San Angelo's Light Up a Life Tree Lighting Service and Candlelight Memorial Service are two opportunities to intentionally remember and include our loved ones in holiday rituals. Each event has its own personality and emphasis, and we encourage you to participate in both. Feel free to invite friends and family members, also. For more information about these and any of HOSA's bereavement services, please contact Karen at 325-658-6524 or kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!

Light Up a Life

Thursday, December 2, 2021

6:00 p.m.

Cactus Hotel Lobby

36 East Harris Avenue

Candlelight Memorial Service

Thursday, December 16, 2021

6:00 p.m.

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

3 South Randolph Street

Grief Education & Support Group

Tuesday, December 7, 2021

5:30 p.m.

WTRC/HOSA Bates Bereavement Center

1933 University Avenue

Monthly Luncheon

Tuesday, December 21, 2021

11 a.m.

Miss Hattie's Restaurant

26 East Concho Avenue

Please note: Beginning January 18, 2022, HOSA will host the Monthly Luncheon in the WTRC/HOSA building, 1933 University, at 11:00 a.m., the third Tuesday of each month. See the January LIFT for more information, and plan now to attend.

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EXCERPT: THE HOLIDAYS REMIND US THAT GRIEF CANNOT BE WISHED AWAY

By Dr. Heather Servaty-Seib, Professor and Associate Dean of Counseling Psychology, Purdue University

Accessed at theconversation.com

The year-end holidays are a time of social gatherings, traditions and celebrations. They can also be a time of revisiting and reflection.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2.8 million people die each year in the U.S. If we conservatively estimate four or five griever per death, there are 11 to 14 million people who are experiencing their first holiday season without the presence of an important person who has died.

No matter how long it has been since a family member or friend has died, the holiday season can understandably bring grief to the forefront of our minds. Lost loved ones are no longer physically present, and our rituals can remind us of their absence in poignant ways. And it can be challenging for others to know how best to comfort and offer support.

As a licensed psychologist and professor of counseling psychology, my clinical and research interests for the past 25 years have focused on death, dying, grief and loss. A primary goal of my work has been to "make death talkable."

There are a few key points about grief that can make a tremendous difference for people during the holidays and beyond.

First, **grief does not end.** It is a reflection of attachment and love, and our connection with loved ones does not end when they die. Therefore, our grief will not and does not end. Grief is not a sickness to recover from, but rather an unfolding to experience.

Second, grief is not equal to sadness. In fact, **it is not the same as emotions.** Grief is multi-dimensional, and often incorporates emotional, cognitive, physiological, social and spiritual reactions. There is no indication in the literature that grievors must cry. Some grievors may be more emotional and social in their grief expression, while others may be more cognitive and physical.

Last, **grief is unique to each person** within their distinct familial community and cultural contexts. Individuals will grieve based on who they are as people and based on the unique relationship they had with the person who died.

Those relationships can be quite dynamic and complex, and grief will reflect that complexity. It can often be challenging for family members and friends when they are grieving differently from one another. However, they are grieving different relationships with the loved one who died and their grief will then also be distinct.

Contemporary theories expand far beyond stages to acknowledge the tasks of grief and the central nature of sense-making in the grieving process. For example: How do I integrate this death into my life story? Grief is not just about missing the person who died, but also about learning to live in a world where they are no longer physically present.

Developing a more nuanced understanding of the variability, adaptability, and unfolding nature of grief has encouraging implications for grievors. Grievors should:

- Resist societal messages that limit, compartmentalize and minimize your grief.
- Observe your thoughts, feelings and actions, and honor the unique ways that you are expressing your grief.
- Remember that rituals related to grief go beyond formal services, and that post-funeral rituals can take many forms. Allow for recognition of both separation and connection. Annual rituals, such as those that may be incorporated into the holidays, can become new traditions and opportunities for meaningful reflection.

Please note: If you prefer to receive the LIFT via email, or would like to be removed from the mailing list, please contact Karen at 325-658-6524 or kschmeltekopf@wtrc.com. Thank you.

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