



E-Mail Newsletter

OCTOBER 16, 2006

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*"Friends
Helping
Friends."*

• *Everyday
is
A gift, that's
why
We call today
"the present"*

Taking care of you

People have been starting to think about the holidays, the beginning of fall tends to bring on the anticipation of all the holidays that are about to hit us all right between the eyes. Many of us have been through this before, lean on us to help you get through them. Don't look for trouble and try not to dwell on them, get through today, maybe tomorrow or the next week or so, don't worry about the holidays, they will be here whether you want them to come or not. I'll add more on the subject in the November and December Newsletters also.

Uh-Oh, It's That Time Again!

by Russell Friedman & John W. James

The holidays are approaching. A joyous time. A festive time. A time when families and friends celebrate the passage of another year and the coming of a new year.

But not everyone will feel like celebrating.

If this is the first year since the death of a loved one or a divorce, the holidays may be difficult. Since time does not heal emotional wounds, subsequent holiday times may be painful and awkward for you. Even surrounded by family and friends, you may feel isolated, alone, and as if no one understands.

As we move toward Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's Day, again this year, we will also be reminded of the great losses suffered on September 11, 2001. Even those of us not directly affected by the attacks, likely will feel some of that overwhelming sadness.

How grief feels

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss. It is marked by conflicting emotions that result from the change in a familiar pattern of behavior. But from the standpoint of the grieving person, this is how grief may feel:

Grief is the feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there, only to find when we need them one more time, they are no longer there.

Adapting to the absence of a loved one is difficult enough. But, the first holiday season, with its constant reminders of holiday joy and tradition, can be especially painful. At the Grief Recovery Institute we've talked with thousands of people who've told us they wished they could jump from late October right to mid-January. We've heard the same sentiment from people enduring their first holiday season following a divorce.

It's normal to worry that you won't be able to handle the pain of that first holiday season, whether the missing loved one is a spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling or child. You may even think you'd rather skip holiday gatherings. Those feelings and fears are not illogical or irrational. They represent a normal, healthy range of emotions about painful loss and our society's limited ability to talk openly and honestly about grief.

A taboo subject

We all experience losses and we all grieve. Yet, grief is one of the most off-limits topics for discussion in our society. It seems strange that one of the experiences we are all going to have, is the one experience we are ill-prepared for and ill-equipped to talk about. Even more troubling is all the misinformation passed on about grief.

We have been taught to believe that "Time heals all wounds." So people will say, "It just takes time." The griever assumes the advice to be correct, and waits while time goes by. But time is neutral and does nothing but pass.

People also say, "You have to be strong for the children" [or other family members]. So we pass that on to the griever, who dutifully acts strong for the kids, while burying their own feelings deeper and deeper.

We have been socialized to believe that intellectual remarks will help with emotional conflict. So others say, "Don't feel bad, he led such a full life." Maybe he did. But the griever is in emotional turmoil, and that comment, which may be intellectually accurate is not emotionally helpful.

"Recovery from loss is achieved by a series of small and correct choices made by the griever," and none of the pat remarks identified above help the griever take those correct and necessary steps. Rather, the griever is led down a path that leads to more isolation and loneliness.

What grievers want

Several years ago we conducted a survey that asked: "What is the best way to act around someone who has just experienced the death of a loved one?" From the multiple choice answers, 98 percent of the respondents chose: "Act as if nothing had happened."

We also surveyed those who had experienced the death of a loved in the past five years. We asked them: "In the weeks and months immediately following the death of your loved one, what did you most want and need to do?" Ninety-four percent responded: "Talk about what happened and my relationship with the person who died."

This holiday season, there will be plenty of hurting people who, given the opportunity, will want to talk about someone they miss. You will be a most cherished friend or family member if the grieving person feels safe enough to talk to you about what is so foremost on his mind and in his heart. If the person doesn't want to talk about it, don't be offended.

A safe start

At the very least, we suggest that you to bring up the topic, and allow them to decide if they want to talk about it. If you're thinking that it is an awkward question and you don't know how to ask it, we agree with you. So, here's a simple phrase which allows the griever to respond or not as they see fit, but is not an interrogation or a command that they must talk about the loss. "I heard about the death in your family...I can't imagine what this has been like for you."

If you look at that phrase you'll notice that it is actually a statement, but the use of the word "imagine" invites an answer without ever asking a probing question. Interestingly, over the years, we have found the word "imagine" to be the single most open-ended emotional word in the English language. It implies that whatever the griever says will be acceptable. It implies that whatever the griever says will not be judged or criticized. Those are very important safeguards for the griever, who is hyper-aware of any comments or questions which imply that he is wrong or defective for having the emotions associated with loss.

Just use your own memory and experience to recall how important it was to feel safe when your heart had been affected by a painful loss. Many of you may remember having felt hurt by people who were really very close to you, when they said things that didn't feel right, or equally, when they avoided the topic, and left you feeling very confused.

If a friend gets a new sports car, we wouldn't dream of not asking all about it. We know they really want to tell us all about it. We must adopt a parallel notion when something sad

or upsetting has happened. We know, in many cases, they really want to talk about it.

If people don't feel safe to talk, they may find other ways to soothe themselves. That could include alcohol, drugs and food - something in plentiful supply at holiday time, and which may have negative or disastrous consequences.

Take a chance

Communication has its risks. Bringing up a loss - yours or someone else's - may not be welcomed. Good taste and timing are important. For instance, we're not suggesting that just as Grandpa starts to carve the turkey, you blurt out, "How have you been since Grandma died?"

However, from personal experience, we can tell you that it would not make any sense not to mention someone very important to us. Russell's personal story illustrates this idea: "My mother died ten years ago on the day before Thanksgiving, and that holiday hasn't been the same for me since. But I always take the opportunity to toast my Mom and say how much I miss her. Invariably, the others at the table start talking about people they miss. The stories and the memories they evoke are filled with laughter and tears."

The ability to communicate our emotions openly and clearly, happy or sad, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of being human. It is less human to exclude from discussion those people so important in our past.

Being afraid of sad feelings can deprive us of the treasure trove of memories attached to relationships with people who have died. Overcoming this fear, especially at holiday time, allows us to claim the full memory of the person we're missing. People are surprised to discover that even though there may be some sadness, there may be plenty of joy as well.

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Until next month

Good grief

AnneGD@groww.org



Chatting Tips: staff@groww.org

When you do get in to the chat room, are you finding you can't keep up and the screen is too small? Look up at the top right hand corner and click on the button which says FLOAT... it will open a new window... now MAXIMIZE that window by clicking on the square in the upper right hand corner... the square is between the "-" and the "x"... it will make the room larger, then type *chat font size 14 or 16

If you are having trouble connecting to the chat rooms, you may need to update your java. Are you getting that blue screen when you try to log on? Try this link and follow the

instructions, it should solve your problem

<http://java.sun.com/getjava/download.html>

GROWW Site help

GROWW was created for the purpose of offering peer support to those who had experienced the death of a beloved one. We are not professionals, but members first and volunteers second because we have been where you are now. GROWW is about offering that necessary support when you need it and hope for the future that it is a doable task we are asked to deal with. Most people who come to chat have found Grief Recovery, this is our main chatroom and you will see many different types of death. You may enter other chatrooms/message boards either by using the drop down menu on the main page, or as I always like to use the **Chat Index and Site Map**. Take some time to look at the different branches, you just will be totally amazed at what you find. Each branch has a main page with description of the room and meeting times, message board and chat room, there is also a Meet the Host section for your particular room. For example, did you know we **have** the following branches: **Angels of Addiction** - for parents who had children die due to substance abuse, **Faith Angels – for those questioning their faith whatever it may be, and how it affects you now in grief**, **GROWW for Widows** - those experiencing the death of a spouse or significant other, **GROWW for Widows II** – We like to say for those who have at least a year of grief behind them on this journey and wondering what is next for them, **Tender Angels** - for our younger widow/widowers under the age of 50, or **Golden Angels** - for our widow/widowers over the age of 50, **Guiding Angels** - for those who have had the death of a parent or grandparent, **Heavenly Angels** - for the death of a child, **Reluctant Angels** - death due to suicide, **Rainbow Angels** - Rainbow Angels is a safe and caring place of support for gays and lesbians who have lost their life partner or other family members, **Silenced Angels** - for those who **have lost a loved one to a violent death**, **Unexpected Angels** - for those experiencing the very sudden death of a loved one.

Take the time to explore GROWW. I think you will find as many **who have come** before you, that we have a way of becoming an addiction, but a good one. We have wonderful resource sections, as well as, for those who shop online, a great connection in "HelpGROWW" that in turn helps GROWW by providing necessary funding to continue into the future. Just to make sure there is no misunderstanding – GROWW is a total volunteer organization...NO ONE receives any payment for their services including staff. Any help you could offer to keep the site running is always appreciated and is a great TAX Deduction as we are a federal approved program.

Libby@groww.org

GROWW is a
501© non-
profit
organization.

Any and all
donations are
tax deductible.

For a donation
form click on
the link below

<http://www.groww.org/helpgroww/orderform.htm>



GROWW, Inc.
11677
Douglas
Road
102-PMB 101
Alpharetta,
GA 30005

E-mail
newsletter@groww.org

We're on the Web!
www.groww.org

Contact Information

For information or questions about GROWW, please write to staff@groww.org

Anyone who hasn't signed up for a password for the message boards and would like to do so please go to the following link and submit the information required. Please remember we are all volunteers here and it may take up to 48 hours to process your request.
<http://www.groww.org/community/boards/passwordform.htm>

Web Links

Do you have a website that helps you get through the day, email it to me and I'll post it in an upcoming Newsletter.

Gatherings

There are no Gatherings currently being planned. The GROWW/HALO Tulsa RoundUp was great fun, the numbers were small but we all had a wonderful time, thank you Char for doing a wonderful job. GROWW and HALO split the profit of \$280.00, we were blown away by the generosity since there were only 8 of us that attended.

Recipe

PUMPKIN PIE SQUARES – perfect for all those leftover pumpkins or just to enjoy!

1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup old fashioned or instant oats
1/2 cup packed brown sugar
1/2 cup butter or margarine, softened
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 cup (15 oz.) pumpkin
1 can (12 fl. oz.) evaporated milk (Carnation or your favorite brand)
2 large eggs
2 1/4 teaspoon pumpkin spice
1/2 cup pecans, chopped
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
Whipped Cream

Preheat oven to 350* F.

Combine flour, oats, 1/2 cup brown sugar and butter in small mixer bowl. Beat at low speed for 1-2 minutes or until crumbly. Press into bottom of ungreased 13x9 inch baking pan.

Bake for 15 minutes.

Combine granulated sugar, pumpkin, evaporated milk, eggs and pumpkin pie in large mixer bowl. Beat at medium speed for 1-2 minutes and then pour over crust.

Bake for 20 minutes. Combine pecans and 1/4 cup brown sugar in small bowl. Sprinkle pecan topping over filling. Continue baking for 15-25 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely in pan on wire rack. Cut into 12 squares. Top with whipped cream or whipped topping.

Submitted by Alice I.



