



The Holiday Season is approaching quickly! And with it undoubtedly some angst about how they will look this year. This time of year can be especially difficult after the loss of a loved one and so it is important to recognize that having some sort of “plan” on how you will spend them often helps to relieve some of the stress.

Listed below are a few tips you may find helpful.



10 Suggestions for the Holiday Season

1. Acknowledge the holidays will be different and may be tough.
2. Prioritize and don't overcommit. The holidays are often filled with parties, dinners, and events, save your energy for those that are most important. Consider all of your options and rank them in order of importance. Let your hosts, or guests, know that you may have a change of heart so that they are prepared and won't be overly disappointed in case you are not up to the event on that day.
3. Light a candle in your home in memory of the person you've lost.
4. Make some quiet time for yourself. The holidays can be hectic and bring an onset of extra stress. Set aside time for yourself to journal, meditate, listen to music, or watch old movies.
5. Hang a memory stocking, or create a memory box, and place it in a special place where you and others can write down treasured memories. Choose a special time to read them together.
6. Decide which traditions you want to keep or change. Consider creating a new tradition.
7. Join in on a Zoom bereavement support group. When everyone appears to be filled with holiday cheer sometimes it is helpful to talk with others who are struggling.
8. Ignore people who want to tell you what you “should” do for the holidays. Listen to yourself, trust yourself, communicate with your family and do what works for you.
9. Skip it. Really! If you just can't face the holiday it is okay to take a break this year. However, before you go to this extreme, consider if you could just simplify your holiday. If you do skip, still make a plan. Decide if you will still see friends or family.
10. Remember, it is okay to be happy! Finding happiness doesn't diminish how much you love and miss the person who isn't there this holiday. Don't feel guilty for the joy you do find this holiday season.

In this Newsletter you will find information about our Zoom Bereavement Support Groups, our bi-monthly Book Study, as well as informative articles to support you on your path of healing.

Wishing you a peaceful Holiday Season.



Broken Heart Syndrome

Takotsubo Cardiomyopathy

Karen Turek, D.D., Ph.D.

I am often asked, as a bereavement counselor, “Has anyone ever died of a broken heart?” Unfortunately, the answer is “yes.” But let me elaborate on my answer. Firstly, most all cases of broken heart syndrome are temporary and do not result in a permanent condition or

death. The symptoms that are experienced are brought on by acutely stressful situations and extreme emotions such as the loss of a loved one, a serious accident, a sudden illness, a natural disaster or even a positive event like winning a lot of money.

Broken heart syndrome is often referred to as cardiomyopathy, takotsubo cardiomyopathy (Tako tsubo are Japanese octopus traps that resemble the pot-like shape which the stricken heart temporarily takes on) or apical ballooning syndrome. It is believed to be brought about by a sudden rush of surging stress hormones that “stun” the heart. This causes a temporary ballooning of the left ventricle. The stress induced characteristics of broken heart syndrome are rarely fatal but need to be address by a medical physician immediately. This is nothing to excuse, or ignore, as a self-diagnosed temporary condition. It is real and the symptoms can lead to short-term heart muscle failure that resembles a heart attack. I always suggest to the newly bereaved that they see their primary medical doctor after the loss of a loved one, even if they feel physically well, to inform the doctor of their loss and to get a wellness check. The effects of stress can be fatal!

The most common symptoms that are experienced are: chest pain and shortness of breath. I have also had folks, mostly women by the way, that describe the feeling of an invisible band wrapped around their chest that constricts breathing. A familiar statement is, “I just can’t get a deep breath.” I have pointed out that a common response to shock, or acute stress, is for someone to actually hold their breath. Completely unaware of what they are doing, a simple cue to “breathe” is often enough to bring awareness and return to a normal breathing rhythm.

Awareness is the best preventative medicine for many conditions and I encourage you to visit The Mayo Clinic and/or Johns Hopkins University websites to read their articles about broken heart syndrome.

Stay well, stay safe, stay informed. And...don’t forget to stay in touch!

-Dr. Karen





Bereavement Support Groups

A Plus Hospice Care is here to support you through the loss of your loved one. Our Bereavement Program offers a variety of options tailored to give you the opportunity to choose the level and amount of bereavement care that is best for you during this time of social distancing.

We provide individual counseling sessions for family members whose loved ones have been on our service via telephone or FaceTime as well as Bereavement Group and Book Study via Zoom.

To best stay connected at this time we are offering:

Bereavement Group via “Zoom”: On the **First Tuesday** of the month we will provide an open forum support group to share our feelings as we move through the grieving process. **2:30-3:30 pm.**

October 6th November 3rd December 1st

Book Study Group via “Zoom”:

Our October book is: “Radical Compassion” by Tara Brach

October 14th at 1:00-2:00 pm and October 28th at 1:00-2:00 pm

Our November book is: “You are Here” by Thich Nhat Hahn

November 11th at 1:00-2:00 pm and November 25th at 1:00-2:00 pm

Our December book is: “Care of the Soul” by Thomas Moore

December 2nd 1-2 pm December 16th 1-2 pm December 23rd 1-2 pm

“Waiting to Live Again” by Alana Klumpp

Though your eyes cannot see them. They stand beside you.
Though your ears cannot hear them. They whisper and sing to you.
As you grieve they see your tears,
When you sit in the dark. They wait with you.

While you mourn, While you breathe,
While you wait to heal, They pray for you...to come back to life.
As they have been re-created into something new, you too must re-create an existence for yourself...One that you can live with...for live you must.

Go forward you can...learn to live again you will. They stay with you while you learn how.



If you are interested in participating please contact Dr. Karen at karen@aplushospicecare.com or (775) 351-7346 for details and instructions. If you are not familiar with the Zoom venue please don't shy away. It is not difficult and I am delighted to walk you through the instructions.

Mourning... the Passage of Time

Karen Turek, D.D., Ph.D.

Many who have experienced the loss of a loved one feel as though their lives today are grouped into two categories: before and after their loss. Sometimes finding it difficult to mourn the past while also appreciating the present and looking forward to a life "after." There is a myriad of mixed emotions that surface when attempting to move gracefully into the future while mourning the past. Very tricky, and many times exhausting, until a point in mourning is reached when expectations for the future are able to be released. It's true...life will never be the same. But our love for our loved one is not in the past it is now, and always will be. It can be unnerving when the passage of time begins to make our memories a little hazy and... the day that we realize that we have forgotten some of the sensory memories, like the sound of our loved one's voice, is usually traumatic and can be the cause for an unexpected grief attack. Our hearts don't want to live in the "after" on those days. So, remembering that our love lives on can serve as a healing balm for the tender heart.

Time can be a thief; it flies by in a blink of an eye and doesn't even have the courtesy to acknowledge what it has taken from us. But there are always two sides to a coin and sometimes time can give us opportunities to grow in ways that our "before" life didn't. It may be difficult to imagine right now but, a healthy "after" usually includes creating new ways to engage and perhaps even help others, as you are able. Volunteering time to help someone in need is very rewarding and helps us to remember what we still have, gratefully. A grateful heart is a happy heart and so I encourage you, when you are ready, to reach out. You will not only heal your own heart but touch the heart of others. It's a win, win act of love!



I Will Light Candles this Christmas

by: Howard Thurman

**I will light the candles:
candles of joy despite all sadness,
candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
candles of courage for fears ever present,
candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
candles of love to inspire all my living,
candles that will burn all the year-long.**