

# See the Good in Grief

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Good Grief!

Hello,

The Baptist Centers for Good Grief, with the National Alliance for Children's Grief, recognizes November as Children's Grief Awareness Month and Thursday, November 18<sup>th</sup> as Children's Grief Awareness Day.

Through the Good Grief programs, Baptist Memorial Health Care has been supporting grieving children in the Mid-South for over twenty years. Since starting Camp Good Grief in 1999, we have provided over 48,000 sessions for this diverse population of young people. It has been our privilege to be able to support grieving children and their families in our community. It's been said that the work of childhood is "play," but grieving children don't always have that luxury. By incorporating play in our camps and other therapeutic activities, we hope that we have given that gift back to some of the children with whom we have worked.

When grieving children are supported well following a loss, it helps them become healthy, expressive adults. As we approach the holiday season, keep in mind that children experience many of the same challenges that adults will during this stressful time. The Center for Good Grief is here for grieving children and adults alike. We know that just like adults, children's grief is real, it is BIG, and it is better shared.

We hope to see everyone soon,

Angela Hamblen Kelly, LCSW  
Executive Director



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## Why Are the Holidays So Hard for Grievers?

As you are probably acutely aware, grief is difficult on an average, “normal” day. Special days tend to magnify and intensify those already difficult feelings – the weight of sadness feels heavier, the emptiness more acute, the anger more intense, and the joy and spirit of gratitude harder to access. Family is the central focus of the holiday season, and there is a key member of your family or friend group missing. Your loss is immediately highlighted. Past traditions cannot necessarily exist in the same way, and this is a loss in and of itself.

Have you noticed that the holiday season has become longer and more intense over the last several years? It creates added stress and requires so much energy. Often, grieving people do not have energy to spare – they are doing their best just to get through each moment of each day. The season starts immediately after Halloween, and feels like it goes on and on. The build-up lasts for many weeks, and the air of festivity can be elusive for the griever. For non-grieving people, this feels stressful; for the grieving person, it can feel unmanageable. Take heart and hold on to hope. The Center for Good Grief is here for you and your family as you face the challenges of the holiday season.

You may find it difficult to access a spirit of gratitude while coping with loss at Thanksgiving time. Frankly, sometimes it feels hard to be thankful when your world has suffered such a change. Remember, it is ok to feel whatever you feel – happy, sad, angry, grateful, resentful. This is just a picture of your grief at the moment. Scale back your expectations of what you should be doing or thinking. Try to find some gratitude in the small things. For example, “Today, I am grateful for being able to get out of bed, have a slice of pie, or take a nap.”

One of the key elements of coping with grief during a difficult time is ensuring support. Support can and does look a lot of different ways. Some people in your life may offer emotional support – they will sit with your pain and listen as you share your grief. Others may offer more practical forms of support, such as taking care of errands or chores. Often, people want to be there for their loved ones who are grieving, but they aren’t sure how. Think about the ways in which the different people in your life may best be able to help you during this holiday season, and then



ask them for help. You may find that they are glad to have an opportunity to be of support to you in a way they know is meaningful.

Acknowledge that you are grieving this year and there is a missing part of your holiday – other family and friends feel it also, in different ways. Sometimes that acknowledgement, while it brings the grief to the forefront, also allows you to breathe through the moment. As always, the Center is available for support before and after Thanksgiving, so reach out when needed.

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## Tips for Coping With the Holidays

As you might be aware, there is no magical recipe for coping with grief. In general, it takes a lot of time, patience, and all the coping skills you can muster. We here at the Center spend a lot of time talking about coping skills in general and about coping with the holidays specifically. Here are some practical tips that we've come up with in order to cope. It is by no means exhaustive, but we know it has helped a lot of our clients over the years.

1. Expect to feel your grief in spite of the “Happy Holidays.”
2. Feel whatever you feel – it’s ok to feel sad, good or both.
3. Make a plan for yourself, but also be flexible.
4. Accept your limits.
5. Take care of your physical, spiritual and emotional needs.
6. Welcome your loved one to the holiday – engage in deliberate remembering.
7. Extend a helping hand to others in need.
8. Never lose hope – your holiday may look and feel different, but (even if not this year) it can be good again.



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## Coping Skills Toolbox – Positive Self-Talk

Before you discount the power of positive self-talk, you might consider giving it a real try. As a coping skill, this is not meant to be used to “Sally Sunshine” yourself into thinking that something bad has not happened – we all know that does not work. Instead, this is a tool that is used to reflect self-kindness and compassion. Grieving people are notoriously hard on themselves. You might be thinking, “Why is this so hard? Why do I feel this way? What is wrong with me? What is wrong with everyone else?” Positive self-talk just prompts a reframing of these thoughts:

Why is this so hard?

This IS hard and I’m doing the best I can.

Why do I feel this way?

I feel like this because I’m grieving a person I love very much and I don’t know what to do.

What is wrong with me?

Nothing is wrong with me, I am grieving.

What is wrong with everyone else?

You got me there. I don’t have an answer for that aside from the world out there doesn’t understand grief very well.

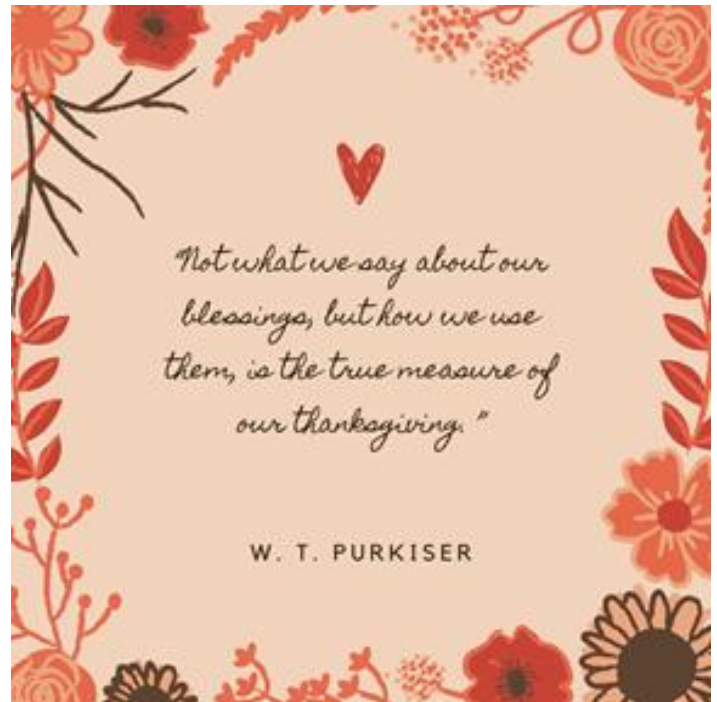
When you find that your thoughts are not helping you very much, this is the skill to practice using. Are you being self-critical? Can you reframe, be more balanced, and reflect a little kindness your own way? Instead of listing out the reasons that you cannot cope, choose self-compassion and reassure yourself. As you learn to use the skills that work, your capacity to cope with your grief grows. Just as the holidays are a season, transient and sometimes overwhelming, your grief is also a season.





## Be the Good in Grief

If you have heard the story about how the Centers for Good Grief came to be, you know it all started with a dream and a small grant from the Baptist Memorial Health Care Foundation to help children who had lost special people in their lives. Camp Good Grief began in 1999, and our staff was so responsible with the initial grant, they made it last multiple years. Because of the overwhelming number of applicants, the success of Camp Good Grief programming, and continued vast community need, we added a camp for teens and, eventually, a camp for adults. We like to say we added “walls” around our camp programming to begin providing year-round services in 2005 when we opened our first Center for Good Grief. Through the years since that first space opened, we have continued to expand.



We are only able to continue serving our Mid-South community because of generous financial donations. We are so grateful for our donors who understand how valuable it is to provide safe environments for children, teens and adults to explore and express their feelings after the death of a loved one and to learn to thrive in a world without that special person.

We strive to be good stewards of every dollar we receive, and we hope you see the true measure of our thanksgiving in how we use our resources and blessings the best way possible. Because we truly value each penny, would you consider donating \$20.21 in honor of Thanksgiving this year? You can always make your gift in honor of someone walking beside you in this season of life, and if you are able, include a name and address so we can notify them of your thanksgiving for their blessings!

Visit <https://baptistgriefcenters.org/> to donate today!

You can also like, comment, and share our messages on social media. Follow along on Facebook at *Baptist Centers for Good Grief – Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla’s House and NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief*.

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## Dates to Remember: Grief Support Groups

**Kaleidoscope Series** - educational and supportive virtual grief seminars provided by grief counselors for grieving adults.

### *Coping with Grief During The Holidays* – choose one

November 1 – 12-1:30pm

November 2 – 9-10:30am or 6-7:30pm

November 3 – 3:30-5:00pm

November 4 – 9-10:30am or 3:30-5:00pm

### **Registration Required:**

TN/MS call 901-861-5656

AR/MO call 870-936-7719



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## Take Five!

Here are five resources to help you along your journey.

1. “Three C’s for Holiday Grief” – Hospice Foundation of America  
<https://hospicefoundation.org/End-of-Life-Support-and-Resources/Grief-Support/Journeys-with-Grief-Articles/Three-C-s-for-Holiday-Grief>
2. “How to Deal With Grief During the Holidays” – Psychology Today -  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201512/how-deal-grief-during-the-holidays>
3. See us on Facebook at *Baptist Centers for Good Grief* – *Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla’s House* and *NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief* for our “Tips for Coping with the Holidays” and “Grief Breaks.”



4. “NAGC Holiday Toolkit: Supporting Grieving Children During the Season of Family” – National Alliance for Grieving Children <https://childrengrieve.org/resources/holiday-toolkit>
5. “Surviving Thanksgiving: 6 Tips for Grievers” – <https://whatsyourgrief.com/surviving-thanksgiving-6-tips-for-grievers/>



## The Next Step

This is an activity to complete on your own as a way of expressing your grief and coping.

It is hard to remember self-care during this holiday season. We get so busy with the stress and activities that we do not dedicate any time for quiet reflection. Take 15 minutes and write about what you need this holiday season. Then try listening to yourself.



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