

See the Good in Grief

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Good Grief!

Hello,

It's that time of year again. The usual themes of the holiday season are all around— family, celebration, giving and receiving, and hope. You might feel like you are struggling to connect with any of these central themes. Your family looks and feels different, you don't feel like celebrating, giving or receiving “stuff” doesn't seem to matter, and hope feels elusive. That's all right. Sometimes we need to reframe the way that we think about the holidays. Maybe this year, the focus needs to be on joy.

Stay with me for a minute. Joy may feel just as elusive as all of the other themes. But, what we find is that sometimes it creeps in unbidden. I don't mean full on “Joy to the World,” shout to the rooftops, complete happiness. But I do mean small moments that fill your heart and mind with something other than the pain of your grief. A song that touches you and makes you smile because you remember, the smell of pine outside, or a sense of pride in surviving the day. Moments of joy are maybe a more manageable hope than a “happy holiday.” So perhaps think of focusing your theme there – searching for tiny bits of joy in a season that might feel challenging for you. As always, the Baptist Centers for Good Grief is here for you and willing to help you try to find the joy in the midst of the holidays.

Also, we post daily on social media. Follow us on Facebook for helpful thoughts, articles and holiday tips at *Baptist Centers for Good Grief – Kemmons Wilson Family Ctr & Milla's House and NEA Baptist Center for Good Grief*.

Sincerely,

Angela Hamblen Kelly, LCSW
Executive Director
Baptist Centers for Good Grief

Baptist Centers for Good Grief



Grief
is
real.



Grief
is
BIG.



Grief
is
better shared.

Self-Care and the Holidays

Remember how important it is to take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually during the holiday season. Physical care seems intuitive, but at this time of year, it has to be intentional. Allow time for both rest and nutrition. Some of our clients have built in a “rest time” during the middle of the day to either nap or just put their feet up and relax. Even if this happens in the middle of a holiday event, it is all right. Sometimes it gives you just what you need to keep going the rest of the day. Similarly, paying close attention to what you are eating and how much water you drink daily can help your overall feeling of well-being. There is a tendency to eat too much heavy holiday food and neglect staying hydrated. Being mindful about eating and drinking in healthy ways is a simple thing that you can do to take care of yourself.



Emotional and spiritual care are just as important as your physical self-care. Be sure you create some “heart time” – time to confide how you are feeling and coping with someone you trust. Be sure this is someone you can be honest with and who will support you. Allow yourself some “soul time” as well. Write in a journal, read, or pray to tend to your spiritual needs. Attend a church service if you feel up to it. This can help you feel more a part of your faith community during this difficult time. Above all, maintain hope that the holidays will be good once again, even if not this year.

Coping Skills Toolbox Series – Memorialization

Memorialization is a simple coping skill with a fancy name. At its heart, it is deliberate, intentional remembering, either by yourself or with others who also love the person who died. Our friend Alan Wolfelt recommends the use of ceremony or ritual in order to continue the work of mourning: “Ceremonies are helpful in grief because they give us a time and place to express our thoughts and feelings. They give us a structure for mourning. They also bring people together to support one another.”

Here are some examples of ways to create ceremony and “bring your loved one to the table” at the holidays. You might consider a ritual of remembrance. This can include making a trivet

with your loved one's name on which to place a holiday dish or lighting a candle that burns through the day in their memory. Some families have created a memorial table with pictures and items that spark memories of their loved one. Gift giving can be challenging when grieving – you may not feel that you have the time, energy, or extra money to dedicate to the task. Memorial gifts, donations, or special object gifts can be ways of remembering, and they can also ease one of the more difficult tasks of the season. Special object gifts can include linking objects (things that belonged to your loved one or that remind you of them) or other symbols of hope. Some families have had quilts made of the clothing of their loved one. Other families have had ornament parties where each guest brings an ornament that reminds them of their loved one. Finally, family members can write down special memories of their loved one and place these notes in stockings in lieu of stocking stuffers. Remember, it is important to acknowledge your loved one, even if it feels difficult. Family and friends are feeling the weight of the absence too, and remembrance allows you to rely on one another for support.



Be the Good in Grief

Do you have a memory of a favorite gift? How about a special memory of a gift you have given someone else?

The holidays are synonymous with gifts. Decorated window fronts entice us to step inside to shop. Online sales make it simple to purchase items from anywhere and have everything delivered to you. Boxes and bags, wrapping paper and ribbons. Gifts for family and gifts for friends. Even silly, little gifts we exchange for fun. Gifts of time and gifts of service usually abound this time of year, too. We make a point to spend time with those we care about and try hard to serve those who need it most.



But what do you give someone who is grieving?

We strive to provide a safe environment for ANYONE in our community to explore and express their feelings after the death of a loved one and learn to thrive in a world without that special person. With our uniquely trained professional counseling staff, we sit with grief a lot. We listen to stories of all the love that was, we listen to the ways love still feels, and we make plans for all that love can continue to be. We think it is important for you to honor the past, to remain present, and to build a future, and we hope you have found great strength in doing this work beside us.

Just as we do this work with you, it is important for us to also honor our past, remain present, and build a future for the Baptist Centers for Good Grief. We love to see how far we have come since our first Camp Good Grief in 1999, we focus on all that we can do today, and we have exciting plans to serve our community in greater ways in the future. To ensure we are able to continue this work, we need financial gifts.

Can you make a special gift this holiday season to honor the past, remain present, or build a future for the Baptist Centers for Good Grief? We would love for you to consider making a gift of \$130 (typical cost for one hour of professional counseling) and tell us what this special gift will honor – your past, present, or future. Visit <https://baptistgriefcenters.org/give/> to make this gift today, and please include a note if you would like to honor or remember someone.

As always, you can 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:

Dates to Remember: Grief Support Groups

Adult Grief Groups

Homicide Grief Support Group— monthly virtual support group

January 18 from 5:00-6:30pm

February 15 from 5:00-6:30pm

Registration Required:

TN/MS call 901-861-5656

AR/MO call 870-936-7719

2022 Virtual Group Preview – more info to come



February: Spouse Loss Support Groups; Adult 6 Week Support Group

March: Child Loss Support Group; Teen Camp Good Grief

April: Teen Monthly Grief Support Groups

May: Monthly support groups begin for Suicide Loss; Pregnancy & Infant Loss; Alcohol & Drug Related Loss; Walking Grief Group & Grief Bible Study

June: Camp Good Grief & Putting Emotions Into Motion for children

2022 Virtual Seminar Preview – more info to come

February: Enneagram & Grief – February 17 from 5:30-7:00pm

March: Relaxation & Grief – March 24 from 5:30-7:00pm

April: Coping with Anger in Grief – April 19 from 4-5:30pm

May: The Importance of Self-Care in Grief – May 10 from 4-5:30pm

June: Grief & Your Body – June 23 from 12-1:30pm

Take Five!

Here are five resources to help you along your journey.

1. Alan Wolfelt on memorialization -
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VKxu3rAlHw>
2. “Four Easy, Last Minute Ideas for Memorializing Loved Ones this Holiday” – *What’s Your Grief* -
<https://whatsyourgrief.com/four-easy-last-minute-ideas-memorializing-loved-ones-holiday/>
3. *It’s OK That You’re Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn’t Understand* – Megan Devine
4. “In Moments of Darkness, Hanukkah Reminds Us to Search for the Light” – Traci Voelke
<https://www.taps.org/articles/2017/hanukkah>
5. *Healing Your Holiday Grief* – Alan Wolfelt



The Next Step

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

Create a memory ornament. Secure a plain ornament - either wooden or plastic work the best for this activity. Using a paint pen, craft paints and a brush, a sharpie, or whatever you might have on hand, write your loved one’s name on the ornament, and decorate as you would like. Hang the ornament on the tree, in a window, on the mantle, or anywhere around your home. This can be considered a holiday item or an item of remembrance for anytime. It is simply a physical reminder of that which is in your heart. This activity can be a positive act of memorialization for both adults and children.



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