



# *Wishing you comfort and peace...*

It's that *certain* time of year, autumn into winter – a time of gathering, traditions, memories, celebrations, endings, and beginnings. And it can be an *uncertain* time, especially when we're in the throes of grief. Summer ends without signaling its last lovely warm day, and fall "falls" like an unexpected weight. School starts, followed by the celebration of Rosh Hashanah and the solemnity of Yom Kippur. Halloween rears its "monstrous" head, and suddenly it's 30 degrees and we're slogging through a snowstorm. Thanksgiving spills out like an upside-down cornucopia, and the next moment it's Christmas or Chanukah or Kwanzaa. One year comes to a close and a brand new year begins on a cold, dark midnight.

Just experiencing the change of seasons can be difficult. It reminds us that time is moving ahead, seemingly more quickly, and that the person we love and miss so much is no longer going forward with us in the same way – that they are somehow more a part of a past to which we cannot return. Suddenly we find the holidays looming ahead, overwhelmingly full of expectations and "business."

We'd like to get through the holiday season with a minimum of chaos or disappointment. We're looking for answers, for ideas, for direction, for peace.

If this is your first holiday season missing the person you love so much, please accept our heartfelt sympathy as you move into this challenging time. Even if you can't imagine caring about what will happen during the holidays right now, it's in your best interest to think about how you will manage these special days. Even when you've come up with arrangements that seem realistic and comfortable for you, everything may not turn out as you hoped it would, and that's okay.

Grief teaches us that, "Life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans" (attributed to Allen Saunders in *The Reader's Digest*, 1957, and John Lennon). When it comes to the holidays, however, it's still better not to be caught completely off guard and unprepared.

*More on reverse ►*

It isn't easy to accept that these special days may somehow be "less" than they've been in the past, but there will be other years, other holidays, and better times. Many grieving individuals and families have found their way through the holidays by setting realistic expectations, letting others help, and listening to their hearts. We'd like to share some of their collective wisdom with you. As time goes on, we hope that you begin to glimpse hope on your horizon. As Anonymous so wisely said, "This is not the end of joy."

1. Give yourself permission generously – permission to miss what used to be, permission to change things that you need or want to be different, permission to change things back at another time, and permission to adapt and change your plans as necessary.
2. Anticipate what will be different without your loved one in practical ways. Is there someone who can help with the things he or she used to do to get ready for the holidays or should you let some of that go? Deciding (for yourself or as a family) what those important things are can help you get a much clearer sense of what really matters and also avoid getting caught up in unrealistic expectations.
3. Find ways to memorialize and include your loved one in your traditions and celebrations. Say his name. Tell stories about her. Home-grown rituals are helpful – hanging your loved one's stocking and filling it with notes or donations to charity, his place set at the table, a plant in her memory taken to church, a special ornament, or a candle lit in his honor.
4. Take care of yourself. The things you do every day to maintain your health and wellness are even more important when you're grieving through a stressful time.
5. Be patient with yourself and others. Be flexible and participate in the holidays to the extent that you can, without guilt or remorse. ■

## Grief & Loss Services

Rainbow Hospice and Palliative Care is committed to offering individual and family counseling, support groups, and educational workshops to our hospice families and members of our community.

For more information, to make an appointment, or to register for a group, please call Rainbow Grief & Loss Services. We can be reached Monday through Friday, 9:00am to 5:00pm, at 847-653-3141.

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