




goodwords

news from the good grief center for bereavement support



Grief & The Holidays: A Survival Guide

At some point in life, everyone will  experience grief. During the holiday season, when everyone expects you to be happy or at least act happy and join in the festivities of the season, the added pressure and stress can make grieving even more difficult.

Whether you're grieving the loss of a loved one or are the friend, coworker, neighbor or family member of someone who's grieving, here are a few tips to get you through.

For the boss/coworker/neighbor of someone who's grieving:

1. A little acknowledgement goes a long way

When confronted by a situation where a good friend, coworker or other such associate is grieving during the holiday season, a little acknowledgement can go a long way in an already alienating environment. Express your sympathy honestly and openly. And while someone who is grieving may choose not to attend, it's still important to extend the invitation to regular holiday activities like lunches and office parties.

2. Have a little faith in me

Trust in the decision of someone who's grieving. Despite their world being turned potentially upside down, it's critical that you trust their judgment and not push them to join in on the fun at an office party because YOU think "it will be good for him/her." Listen to them when they say, "Thanks, but I'm just not ready yet."

3. Use the deceased's name

Often there's a fear about saying the name of the person who's died; as if somehow saying the name will cause more pain. However, phrases like, "So sorry for your loss," and even using only pronouns like, "She was so wonderful," and "He will be truly missed," tend to negate the person's existence in the first place.

For the person grieving:

1. You don't have to

If certain family traditions are making you uncomfortable this year don't do them. For instance don't carve the turkey if you don't want to, or don't sing along if you don't want to. Be careful not to throw out all your traditions, but don't be afraid to drop some either. You can always pick them up another year.

2. Drop before you shop

Feeling overwhelmed by a long gift list – 12 days of Christmas, 8 days of Hanukkah, or everyone seems to have been born in the same month!?! Simplify. This is a perfect time to give yourself the gift of simplicity and the joy that comes with it.

3. Checking it twice

Whether the holiday involves cooking, shopping, cleaning or organizing, you have plenty of details to keep up with. Let a list do the work for you. If you are grieving, your memory may not be up to par, or you may be having trouble concentrating. That's "normal." Rely on your notes and lists, and keep them handy.

4. Do you remember?

Companionship, laughter, tenderness... what do you remember? The person you are grieving gave you all kinds of gifts – tangible and intangible – during your time together. Write them down and keep them someplace special.

5. Where's the party?

Just because everyone always comes to your house for the holidays or special occasions doesn't mean they have to come this year. Feel free to try something else to give yourself the space you need to grieve. Too tired to whip up your famous recipe? That's okay. Let someone else prepare it to your specifications.

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6. Surprise!

Be prepared for the holidays as well as birthdays and anniversaries and other special occasions to be an emotional time for you. Don't be surprised by tears and sadness, and don't fight them off. Instead carry tissues. Tell the people you are with that you probably will cry, and invite them to cry with you.

7. Just say no

If you are feeling pressured to participate in more than you're comfortable with try saying "No thank-you." You don't owe anyone an explanation. Be kind, but firm. People will want you to feel welcomed and included, but they will also understand that you need some time.

8. Share the love

Holidays and special occasions where gift giving is the custom may be hard in that no gift is being purchased for the deceased. Consider buying a gift for someone who would otherwise not have a gift or make a contribution to a charitable organization in that person's name.

9. Tell me again

Instead of trying to push back memories of the person you are grieving this holiday, ask friends and family members to share recollections of the person with you in photographs, stories and mementos. Some families box, wrap and give each other memories. Trinkets that remind us of the family member or friend are especially enjoyed by, and helpful for, children.

10. Pay attention

Most importantly, pay attention to yourself. Listen when that little voice tells you you're tired, and need to take a break from holiday preparation. Give yourself the option of not attending another party or event. And be sure to let your friends and family members know what you're up for and what they can do to help.

Simplify. This is a perfect time to give yourself the gift of simplicity and the joy that comes with it.

Traditionally, the holidays are a time for cheer—



but for those who are grieving the **loss of a loved one**, it can be an especially difficult time of year.

This holiday season, show grieving friends, family and co-workers that you care with a **Good Grief Care Package**.

Inside the elegantly designed box are tools which offer comfort and support to help manage grief.

Give one, and make the season for celebration also the season for healing.




good grief center
for bereavement support
412.461.1776
888.GRIEF.88

Visit www.goodgriefcenter.com
to order and learn more
about our services.

message from the executive director

Dear Friends,

Change happens all around us each and every day and GGC is experiencing many, many changes. As we continue to grow, we must attend to the many needs that arise during this exciting time. Here is just a sampling of change going on here:

- Two new staff members
- Planning, packing, moving (by the end of the year) to our new Squirrel Hill home
- Good Grief Care Package stories in newspapers throughout the country resulting in increased sales
- Marketing and presenting our Grief in the Workplace program
- GGC awareness growing, significantly increasing the numbers of people we are serving

What we encourage those who are grieving to do is exactly what we are trying to achieve here at GGC – make a plan, be flexible while adjusting to all the changes and surround yourself with supportive people.

I am so fortunate to have many talented and insightful people surrounding me during this time of great change. The staff here at GGC is above and beyond the best; our Board of Advisors is hands on and willing to do whatever it takes. I would say the people who come to the Center make me believe we will not only survive this transition but most importantly, thrive.

These brave, resilient souls are making changes not by choice but by circumstance. If only they could see in themselves what we see in them: the change in their soft voice, the courage to attend those previously feared social events, the bounce in their step as well as the ability to laugh again. They truly are our role models and our inspiration!

So, as the seasons change, please help alter the avoidance approach to grief. Call or write a friend or family member who is grieving. Let them know you care about them by remembering their loved one. Believe me this will change their day in a very profound and positive way!

Many thanks,

Comments? Suggestions? Send us an email at support@goodgriefcenter.com or visit our website at www.goodgriefcenter.com 412.461.1776

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Our growth over the past year is nothing short of phenomenal. This growth has meant a need to increase staff. We are



excited and very pleased to introduce you to the newest members of the GGC family, Page McSorley and Donna Broderick.

Our Development and Volunteer Coordinator, Donna Broderick, has a strong desire to make

a difference. Great energy, sensitivity and a wealth of excellent experience in grant writing and funding development from both the private foundation community and the corporate world make Donna an excellent fit with GGC. She is a graduate of Carlow College and currently holds a bachelor degree in professional writing.

When Page McSorley was introduced to GGC she immediately understood our mission. With compassionate understanding, she enthusiastically embraced the position of our first Marketing and Sales Coordinator. Page brings a solid ten-year history of experience in the non-profit sector where she worked her way from entry level to the executive level; working with international, national and local non-profits. Page holds bachelor degrees in both Psychology and Sociology from Indiana University.

We are grateful to have Donna and Page working with us. Please join us in welcoming them.

A special thanks...

Bernie
Catharine
Nancy
Rich
Beth
Meghen

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." --Margaret Mead

As we open this new chapter of GGC's history, we want to recognize and thank our dedicated volunteers who have shared their gifts and their compassion with those who have looked to us for comfort and support these past six years.

Volunteers are an integral part of GGC's mission, and, through their efforts, one volunteer at a time, are building a more compassionate community. Over 11,000 Volunteer hours have been provided on site, offering solace, comfort and support. Amazingly, a third of those 11,000 hours can be attributed to our current list of active volunteers.

Those numbers speak to the dedication and compassion of GGC volunteers—something we see here every day. Telling our volunteers, "We couldn't do it without you," just isn't enough. All of our volunteers are changing the world—using their gifts and special abilities on behalf of the GGC.

Jay Bobi Rennie Michelle Susan Jennifer Chris

Linda
Ann
Melissa
Diana
Darla
Sandy
Andrew



Bereavement Support Groups

Meeting at the
Good Grief Center

Open Group

2nd & 4th Thursday
of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Daughters without Mothers Group

1st Thursday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Parents who have suffered miscarriage, stillbirth or infant death

1st Monday of each month
7-8:30 p.m.

Meeting at the North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center

802 McKnight Park Drive, North Hills

Young Spouse/Partner Group

1st Saturday of each month
9:30-11 a.m.

Young Adult Support Group

1st Saturday of each month
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

GGC maintains a comprehensive listing of support groups throughout the region, please call 412-461-1776 for information.

Wish list

Since we are moving into a new space our architect and contractor are hoping to keep most everything new. With that in mind please consider helping us furnish our new home. If you or anyone you know has a business that supplies any of the following, please ask if they might consider a tax deductible donation of:

- Comfortable couches and/or chairs
- Full-size refrigerator
- Dishes & glasses to fill our kitchen cupboards
- Upright piano (certainly doesn't need to be new)
- Brochure / pamphlet racks
- Children friendly furniture, large pillows, etc.
- Art cart with supplies
- Office supplies (we'll have several new work stations to outfit! Maybe your business has an excess of some basics.)
- Moving company services
- Large coffee urn



If you'd like to help and would prefer to make a donation to purchase these materials, please contact Jan McCarthy here at GGC. We are truly grateful for all donations, whether in-kind or monetary in nature. Wishes that are granted will be acknowledged in upcoming newsletters and, as always, are greatly appreciated!

Our mission:

To be a comprehensive bereavement resource and referral center that builds a more compassionate community through grief awareness, education, support and hope; creating a safe place where all who have experienced the pain of death may come to work through loss and learn to manage grief.

The Good Grief Center operates as a non-profit under the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute, a 501(c)(3) organization, which serves as our fiduciary agent.



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munhall, pa 15120

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