



GRIEF SUPPORT & HOLIDAYS

Joelle K. Osterhaus, LCSW, LICSW, ACHP-SW
Kaiser Permanente Hospice & Palliative Care (Portland, OR)
Psychosocial Services Supervisor

Diane Snyder Cowan, MA, MT-BC, CHPCA
Western Reserve Grief Services (Cleveland, OH)
Director

Introduction

- Introductions of Facilitators:
Joelle & Diane
- What is NCHPP?
- Format, interaction discussion

Holidays and Grief

- Although mourning knows no season; holidays can be a difficult time for those grieving.



- Many bereaved express feeling unsure or anxious trying to find their way through a holiday with out the person who died

Why can holidays
be difficult
for the bereaved?



Examples



- Sadness in a time of joy
- Self-centeredness in a time of selflessness
- Family reunions
- Expectations of the “old me”
- Religious celebrations
- “Firsts”
- Families with differing styles and needs
- Exhaustion (from grief or season)
- Triggers (music, smells, visuals)
- Alcohol

What Helps?

- How do you notice your bereaved coping in times like these?
- What things have your programs tried?



Common Tips

- Four R's:
 - Relax,
 - Reorient,
 - Remember
 - Rely



Reorienting

- Involves recognition that the loss affects this holiday, things will not be the same.
- Invites the bereaved to find their own inner compass (or to do so with their family):
 - What feels most right to you?
 - To keep things as close to how they have always been?
 - Change some things?
 - Change everything?
 - Plan with others and compromise as needed



Relying

- Review support networks
 - in the context of the holiday
- Identify needs and opportunities
- Note the importance of relationships at this time and provide space and time for bereaved persons to connect or relate such as in a workshop or memorial setting



Remembering

- Help foster the maintaining of connections to the person who died

(Continuing Bonds, Robert A. Niemeyer)

- What are ways you have seen or provided support for bereaved who are attaching an action or activity to their remembering?



Ideas for Remembering

- Wrap a favorite keepsake or a framed picture of the deceased and give it as a gift to another grieving family member
- Make a book of memorabilia or pictures about the deceased and share it with one another
- Encourage children to draw pictures or create gifts inspired by their memories of the deceased. Invite them to share them
- Share favorite stories about the person who died
- Donate a favorite book
- Make a financial contribution in the person's honor
- Make their favorite food



More Ideas for Remembering

- Mention their name in the at mealtime (prayer or toast).
- Volunteer your time
- Plant a tree
- Offer a scholarship in a loved one's name
- One family all put notes in a stocking
- Special new décor or ornament
- Create a ritual on a trip
- Have jewelry made into a new setting
- Have a birthday party for them on his/her birthday



Wreaths



- Used around the globe
 - Commonly in remembrance rituals
- Etymology of the word wreath is Old English “*witha*” meaning “*to band*”
- Usually made from evergreens to symbolize strength, as evergreens last throughout the harshest winters.

Concluding Comments

- May people share this reflection post holiday: that the **anticipation** of the holiday is far worse than the actual holiday.
- Each program can shape itself according to the needs and preferences of its bereaved community
- Leaning on this belief about all of our natural capacity to move through grief:

*One day we **will** emerge
from the desolate winter
of our grief.*