



MyNHPCO

Your Community:
Connect. Learn. Share.

Grief Support & The Holidays

MyNHPCO Bereavement Professional Chat October 2020

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MyNHPCO: Where do I find it, and what is it?

- Visit: <http://my.nhpc.org/home> and use your NHPCO email and password to login.
- MyNHPCO is a collaboration of 15 discipline-specific professional and issue-based communities, which are interdisciplinary-focused.
- MyNHPCO contains on-line resources, forums, and networking that will help you grow professionally, find new solutions, contribute to the field, and elevate the national profile of your program.

MyNHPCO Communities

- Each Professional Community includes:
 - Discussion Board with regular posts and responses
 - Monthly Chats
 - Library entries
 - Blog
- Join the Bereavement Professional Community today!

Please contact us...

- If you have questions about membership
- If you have topics you would like us to discuss
- If you would like to become a community committee member
- Stay connected at the Bereavement Professional MyNHPCO Community

Please Know...

- We call this hour a 'chat' for a reason
- Feel free to type in your questions in the chat feature on the side of your screen
- We want everyone to share their experiences
- We will offer suggestions and welcome everyone's input

Introductions...



Joelle & Kara

Holidays and Grief...

Although mourning knows no season, holidays can be a difficult time for those who are grieving.



Many bereaved express feeling unsure or anxious trying to find their way through a holiday without the person who died.

Not Overlooking....The Coronavirus Pandemic

- COVID-19 is undeniably going to impact this fall and winter holiday season
- It continues in its violation of the assumptive world
- Ongoing unknowns – how long will this last? What's next?
- Ongoing isolation and separation
- Sustained state of and cumulative stress/distress
- Diminished access to community life and services as well as to familiar rituals, routines

Why holidays may difficult
for those who are 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

Re-orient

Rely

Remember



Re-orienting

Involves acknowledgment that the loss affects this holiday; that 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(s)

Identify needs, as well as 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 theory, 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/pictures about the deceased and share it

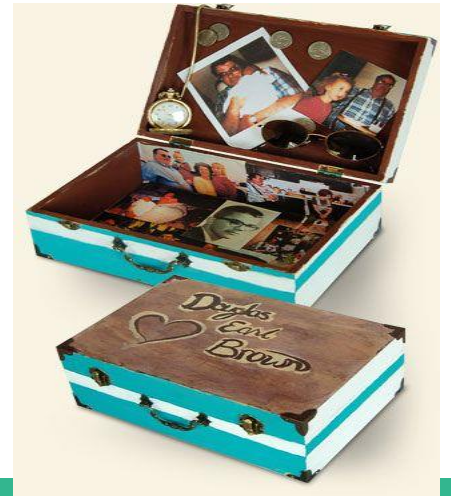
Encourage children to draw pictures or create gifts inspired by their memories of the deceased. Invite them to share them

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 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

Many bereaved share this reflection post-holiday:

That the **anticipation** of the holiday was 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.*