



# *Reflections and Hope Newsletter*

## *Changing of the Seasons*

*Fall 2012*

### **We Remember Them**

In the rising of the sun and its  
going down,  
We Remember Them.

In the blowing of the wind  
and in the chill of winter,  
We Remember Them.

In the opening of the buds  
and in the rebirth of spring,  
We Remember Them.

In the blueness of the skies  
and in the warmth of  
summer,  
We Remember Them.

In the rustling of the leaves  
and in the beauty of autumn,  
We Remember Them.

In the beginning of the year  
and when it ends,  
We Remember Them.

When we are weary and in  
need of strength,  
We Remember Them.

When we are lost and sick of  
heart,  
We Remember Them.

When we have joys and  
special celebrations we yearn  
to share,  
We Remember Them.

So long as we live, they too  
shall live, for they are part of  
us,  
We Remember Them.

~From the Jewish Book of



*How will you manage  
To cross alone  
The autumn mountain  
Which was so hard to get across  
Even when we went the two of us  
together?  
-Princess Daihaku*

### *Transformations in Grief*

Fall's transformations are remarkable. The stunning changing of the leaves, the transitions from summer's heat to crisp cool days, and the shift from outdoor activities to the coziness of a warm home can be comforting. Saying goodbye to the previous season and beginning a new chapter without a loved one can also evoke an array of feelings from fear, loneliness, anger, guilt, and shock. And as the trees lose their leaves and become empty, people in grief may feel the emptiness in themselves.

Facing an intense array of emotions can be daunting as you prepare for a new season and upcoming holidays. It takes great strength to move through the transitions in grief and what each may bring. We hope you can find hope in the new season and when emptiness presents itself, find fullness in family and friends. We hope you find that the other side of grief is seeing what it is to live.

### *Coping with Special Days*

As we grieve for someone who has died, there are a variety of special days throughout the year that may be challenging as well as meaningful.

- *Anniversaries*: The anniversary of a loved one's death or a wedding anniversary.
- *Birthdays*: The birthday of the person who died, your own birthday, or a family member's birthday
- *Season Changes*
- *Special events*: Graduations, weddings, the birth of a child
- *Holidays*: Mother's or Father's Day, Hanukkah, Christmas, Thanksgiving, secular, religious or cultural celebrations important to your family.
- *Days or Times Uniquely Special to You*: A time of year when you normally visited your loved one, a special activity that you shared together routinely



## *Coping with Special Days*

---



### **Comforting Fall Activities**

- Making your loved one's favorite comfort food
- Leaf piles
- Pumpkin carving
- Hiking through a colorful forest
- Pressing leaves
- Spending time at your loved one's favorite place outdoors
- Visit a corn maze
- Volunteer in your loved one's name
- Visit an apple orchard
- Make caramel apples
- Make your loved one's favorite food/dessert for someone who has never had it
- Pumpkin carving

The significance or meaning of a special day will be unique to each person and will be dependent upon the relationship that individual had with the person who died. If you anticipate the arrival of such special days with anxiety, fear, or dread, it may be helpful to review the following information regarding strategies for coping.

#### *The Loss May Feel more Real or Fresh*

When a special day occurs without your loved one, you may feel as though the death seems suddenly "more real." It is hard to understand all at once that someone who has died will not return or to fully understand the many ways the loss will affect our lives. These understandings happen gradually, over time, as we experience life without the person who died.

#### *It is OK to Feel Your Grief*

While special days, such as holidays, may be times for fun and celebration, the absence of the deceased person may bring feelings such as emptiness, loneliness, sadness, anger, guilt or regret. Some people describe a wave of grief that washes over them. These feelings may arise at unexpected times or places. Having these reactions does not mean that you are not healing from your loss. You can expect to feel these highs and low for some time after a loss.

#### *It is OK to Feel Good*

Special days may also bring laughter, happiness or respite from the intense feelings of grief. Sometimes as grieving people begin to feel better, they experience pangs of guilt. Remind yourself that it is okay to feel good. In no way are you being disrespectful to the memory of the person who died if you allow yourself to once again enjoy life.

#### *Creating New Expectations*

Holidays in particular may bring added stress in our lives. Many people have long held beliefs or expectations of what makes a holiday joyful. When grief interferes with our ability to live up to these expectations, we may worry about disappointing others or feeling disappointed ourselves. The pace of holiday activities can grow hectic, placing additional demands on our time and energy. People grieving may feel that they do not have the physical, mental or emotional energy to cope with these added demands. Consider creating some new expectations this year.



## Local Grief Support Groups

### HeartLight Center

11150 E. Dartmouth Ave

Aurora, CO 80014

720-748-9908

[www.heartlightcenter.org](http://www.heartlightcenter.org)

Grief support and educations for adults who have lost a loved one.

### Judi's House

1741 Gaylord Street

Denver, CO 80206

720-941-0331

[www.judishouse.org](http://www.judishouse.org)

Facilitated support groups for children ages 3 to 18 who have experienced the death of a loved one. Parents and caretakers also have the option to participate in support groups.

### Hospice of Saint John

1320 Everett Court

Lakewood, CO 80215

303-232-7900

[www.hospiceofsaintjohn.org](http://www.hospiceofsaintjohn.org)

Provides a variety of support groups for the bereaved and is open to the community.

### The Denver Hospice

501 S. Cherry Street, Suite 700

Denver, CO 80246

303-321-2828

[www.thedenverhospice.org](http://www.thedenverhospice.org)

Offers a variety of support groups to bereaved adults, adolescents and children.

### Angel Eyes

425 S. Cherry Street, Suite 890

Denver, CO 80246

303-320-7771

[www.angeleyes.org](http://www.angeleyes.org)

Provides information, education, and family support for those who have suffered the death of a child by SIDS

## Tips for Coping with Special Days

### Caring for Yourself

- Remember, there is no right or wrong way for you or your family to handle these special days
- You do not have to pretend that everything is normal or that everything will be the same this year. Accept the likelihood that you will have feelings of grief.
- Trying to avoid special days or holidays altogether or trying to deny your feelings takes a lot of energy, and often does not work.
- Plan time during that special day to be with your feelings-alone or with someone you trust. Make plans that build in support for you and that are flexible, allowing you to "opt out" of an activity if it feels too difficult.
- Pay special attention to caring for yourself physically-resting, eating well, exercising or practicing other self-care habits.
- Try to be honest with yourself and others about your limits and your needs for help. Ask for and accept offers of help.



### Planning Ahead

- Set aside time in advance to think about what you want, need or fear about the upcoming special day. Imagine the best and worst-case scenarios about that day.
- Consider having a family meeting to explore the needs and wants of everyone involved, including children.
- It is ok to stray from tradition if it would feel helpful. Below are some helpful questions to consider when making decisions about which traditions or activities to continue, to change or to leave out altogether.
  - ❖ What do I remember about this holiday or special day?
  - ❖ What traditions or activities have been parts of this day in the past?
  - ❖ Do I/we enjoy these activities? Do I/we feel up to doing them this year?
  - ❖ What traditions or activities do we think we will treasure as memories tomorrow?
  - ❖ What did this special day mean to the person who died?
  - ❖ What special roles or functions did the person who died perform?
  - ❖ If these roles or activities will continue, who will do them this year?
  - ❖ Will we feel better trying to keep all of our traditions, by modifying some of our traditions or by changing them altogether?