

Reflections and Hope Newsletter

A bi-annual newsletter to honor organ and tissue donors and their families.



“Perhaps they are not stars, but rather openings in heaven where the love of your lost ones pours through and shines upon us to let us know they are happy.” ✨

-Eskimo Proverb



We welcome stories, poems, pictures or ideas for future editions. It is essential to us that this newsletter grows from the hearts and minds of our donor families. Please submit your input by mail or email to the address listed on the last page.

Thank you for your participation. Your thoughts may play a vital role in another family's grief journey.

Ways to Remember Your Loved One During the Holiday Season

- A ritual or ceremony can be a powerful way to remember a loved one and their life. Light a candle, sit with your memories, and give thanks for the person's presence in the past and the memories that you shared together.
- Prepare a dish using your loved one's favorite recipe or make an entire meal of their favorite foods. Set a place setting for your loved one and invite friends and family to enjoy the meal and share cherished stories and memories of your loved one.
- Create a shrine to your loved one using images, trinkets, candles and mementos.
- Visit a place that was special for your loved one and allow yourself to reminisce about the memories shared in this special place and what it meant to your loved one.
- Make ornaments using photographs of your loved one.
- Display a picture of your loved one under the Christmas tree or any place your family gathers.
- Select a Christmas card for your loved one and write a message for him or her inside.
- Allow yourself some alone time to remember your loved one.
- Donate to a charity in your loved one's name.

A Gift of Life

A time to laugh, a time to cry
A time to meet, a time for
goodbye,
A time for joy, a time for sorrow
A gift of life, another tomorrow..

A memorable day, even one to
forget,
When heaven's gates opened, the
angels he met,
A life cut short but yet fulfilled
Inspiring us all through the actions
he willed.

A time for strength, a time for
healing
Of body and mind, the emotions
we're feeling,
A time for courage, a time for
compassion,
For love and support in unselfish
fashion.

A time for a song, to sail the
ocean,
With strange boat crew, their
undivided devotion,
A time for others, lending their
hand,
Steering the ship, again to dry
land.

A time for contemplation of life
unfolding
Those precious moments all of
which were golden,
The clock does not turn, but
moves ahead,
To face each day with life's
delicate thread.

A time to share, a time to smile
To offer advice on a project
worthwhile
A gift of life is priceless and sweet
Given by angels who once walked
our street.

Deirdre McSherry

"Coping with Grief during a Holiday"

By Kelly Baltzell M.A. & Karin Baltzell Ph.D.

1. **Pace Yourself:** You do not have to uphold all the obligations you did in the past. Allow yourself the luxury to slow down, release and let go to the old "should have" and "have to" concept.
2. **To Say "No" is Okay:** It is okay to tell others NO. This means you can reject invitations or visitors if you don't feel up to it. People will understand if you are not able to attend every function or event.
3. **Pamper Yourself:** If you deplete your energy you will have less strength to care for yourself or others during any holiday celebration. Therefore, take extra time for you!
4. **Tell People what You Need:** Friends and family will not know how to help you or relate to you unless you are specific about your wants and needs. Tell others what you need. Ask for help. Then congratulate yourself when you do.
5. **Make New Rituals:** When you make a new tradition it signals to yourself and others that your life has changed. A new tradition does not mean that your old traditions are any less important.
6. **Honor Traditions:** Traditions hold many emotions for people. After a loss come traditions many become more or less important. Let people know that traditions are meaningful to you and that you want to keep it. It is okay to let some traditions go.
7. **Remember Your Physical Needs:** Eat, sleep and drink plenty of liquids to maintain your physical strength. Be sure to keep your environment clean and orderly to help your emotions and keep you on an even keel.
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9. **Crying is Okay:** Let the tears flow. You need to feel comfortable expressing yourself wherever you are. Crying is a natural outlet of grief. Do not apologize.
10. **Make Action Plans:** During the holidays life can be busy and stressful. Before that special holiday arrives make a plan regarding how you are going to cope with stress. Make a list of people you can call when you need support and places you can go for solace and healing.
11. **Consult Your Family and Friends:** Talk to your family and friends to see what they want to do during the upcoming holiday. Many people may be feeling the same things you are feeling but may not know how to discuss them with you.
12. **Lean on Your Faith:** Remember to touch base with your source of spirituality. It will bring comfort, strength and internal wisdom.



Words of Comfort from Donor Families

The Holiday Season after Nicole

It's been 11 years and holidays are never easy. I just went through the motions that first Christmas. I really don't even remember. After Nicole died Christmas was never the same. The excitement of the season was taken from me and every year is different. Some years are easier. There are times that I don't want to decorate and it takes every ounce of energy to make it happen.

I decided that I wanted to start a new tradition. On Thanksgiving Day we go out to the cemetery and decorate the pine tree that was closest to Nicole's headstone. My Family, best friends, and their kids and my daughter Lyndsey come out and help decorate.

We play Christmas music and drink hot chocolate in honor of Nicole. It's a little celebration with Nicole. I also decorate our blue spruce in our front yard. It's Nicole's tree. She brought the tree home from school when she was in 1st grade. It was Arbor Day and each student was given a sapling to take home. She asked my dad, her pop, to help her plant it so he did and it has thrived and has grown very tall. It is the most beautiful tree.

The struggles of holidays never go away. Holidays are hard but I make the best of them. Now that I have grandchildren, the holiday season isn't as hard as it was a few years ago. I enjoy watching the grandkids and how excited they get. It's hard not to think what Nicole would be like or what would she be doing now. The holidays just bring everything to the surface. It's very bittersweet.

I have been blessed with a very supportive family and friends. I'm also very blessed that I know who received Nicole's organs and that I have a very special relationship with her heart recipient, Mandee and her family. I know that Nicole is with me at all times and that she is my special angel.

Submitted by Amy Johnson

Life is a one way street...no matter how much we may want to turn back the clock, it keeps pushing us forward. And, near the end of each year, we always wind up at the holiday season.

My daughter Jill was killed in a car accident over Memorial Day weekend in 2003. By the time Thanksgiving came that year, I was back at work, able to carry on a conversation and capable of going for several hours without crying. But I was not ready for the holidays.

All of the family sat across the table from each other for the big traditional meal...all of us except Jill, the one who loved these family get-togethers more than anyone else. And we tried to act like everything was all right, but it was nowhere close to that! The meal was punctuated by long silences, the clearing of throats and comments about a football game that no one was watching and the quality of cooking.

I wish I would have suggested to everyone before the day that we dedicate this day to Jill...that we all come prepared with pictures of her and ready to tell stories about her...funny ones, serious ones, old ones and recent. I wish we would have celebrated her more and tried to recapture some of the warmth she always brought. And if we all wound up crying, so what? Wasn't that what we had all been doing for the past six months? Instead, we took the wrong path...we mentioned her name seldom, because someone might become upset...we looked down at our plates instead of at each other... we didn't set a pretty table because that was always *her* job. We behaved as if it were our *duty* to be miserable by ourselves.

No one can deny the elephant in the room. The holidays will never be the same as they were before. But that does not mean they cannot be enjoyable. With time comes a new perspective. You learn what society is willing to accept from you and you learn to live within those boundaries. You create a new normal. You learn that you will always have some place to go for the holidays...even though the right people may not be there when you arrive. Time *does* heal wounds, but it cannot turn back the clock. Things will get better...but you must have patience.

Submitted by Melody Connitt



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*Each day
comes bearing
its own gifts.
Untie the
ribbons.*

-Ruth Ann Schabacker

