


# Holiday Grief Resource Packet

Compiled by  
Trinity Medical Center  
Pastoral Care Staff



J. Andrew Busch  
Mary Colwell  
Robert Hansen  
Denise Paxton  
Larry Shostrom  
Courtney Watson

## Introduction

### **Help with Holiday Grief**

Holidays remind us of loved ones we have lost because they are not here with us, especially for the first holiday following their death. This is also true on the anniversary date of death. These special days are family times of remembering and reflecting. Thus it is understandable that grief is magnified.

This booklet was prepared by the Chaplains of Trinity Medical Center to help those whose holidays will be seen through your veil of grief:

- dread the approaching holiday and its festivities,
- avoid joyous gatherings,
- stay away from people whose presence remind you of your lost loved one,
- not attend religious services
- not prepare or partake of seasonal food.

These are normal grief responses. There is nothing wrong with you. This booklet is designed with you in mind. We can be sensitive to those around us who are in grief and offer support. Maybe even with these helpful writings.

Our prayer is that you be able to experience both your grief and the holidays in a new way. You will not stop grieving but you can learn to live in a healthy way with it.

Have a healthy and peaceful holiday!

The Pastoral Care Staff  
Trinity Regional Health Care system

## **A Holiday Message: Special Handling, Please**

I was handed a package the other day.  
It was wrapped securely to be mailed away.  
Attached to the outside as plain  
as could be was a simple note for all to see:

Please rush through the holiday season;  
Too painful to open for any reason!  
Contained within, find one grieving heart  
Fragile, broken, falling apart.

Tried to go shopping the other day  
The hype of the season blew me away.  
Sat down to write cards,  
That was insane.  
Couldn't find the list  
Or think of my name.

People say, "Come over,"  
"Be of good cheer."  
"Celebrate the holidays,"  
"Prepare a New Year."

But my grief overwhelms me  
Like waves in the sea.  
Can they cope with me crying;  
An unsettled me?

I don't have any holiday cheer,  
Decorations, traditions, big family meal  
I can't do it this year.  
Do you know how I feel?

Guilty and frustrated!  
I've let everyone down!  
Our holiday celebrations  
Used to be the best in town!

So just ship me away  
Address unknown  
When my grief is over,  
I might fly home.

Signed:  
Bereaved Heart  
**The Holiday Army**  
**By Andrea Gambill**

Here it comes again – the Holiday Army – in its annual march against us. Some of its generals are called “Thanksgiving,” “Christmas,” “Hanukah,” “New Year’s Eve,” and “New Year’s Day.” They are no respecters of the heartbroken and emotionally wounded, and their troops are merciless. They take no prisoners! They demand that we participate in their joy and nostalgia or they will mow us down with their militant tanks of holiday spirit.

Sometimes they declare their war on us openly – without shame or remorse. Sometimes, they wait for us in ambush. Their intelligence operators have been working diligently all year, waiting for the Thanksgiving Day (or sometimes Halloween!) trumpet signal to begin their attack. They just don’t seem satisfied to have their celebrations and parties and dinners and festivities unless they can recruit ALL of us into their ranks.

Actually, we wish them well. All we really want is for them to leave us alone and let us mourn in peace and quiet. We prefer our “Silent Nights” to their “Deck the Halls” and “Jingle Bells.” We don’t intentionally spoil their fun; it’s just that our pain makes them uncomfortable. They’ve been conditioned to believe that “The Holiday Season” should have no blemish of suffering or lack of frivolity. We must not only bandage our wounds while in their presence, but cover them with taffeta and sequins besides. They are convinced that all we need is to “put on a happy face” and all our sorrows will magically evaporate.

In their mad pursuit of happiness, they shoot us with the bullets of shopping, piped-in music, special holiday foods and fragrances, gift wrapping, decorations (especially the angels!), joyous children with happy smiles, cards, invitation, parties, and gift exchanges. Any other time of the year, snow is considered a nuisance to shovel and plow through. At the holiday season, though, it is touted as romantic and is linked to sleighs and starry nights in front of fireplaces, snuggled close to those we love.

The most devastating bombs they drop into our lives are the images of reunions – times of greeting and hugging folks who are much loved and sometimes not often seen for awhile. They may only be separated by geography; our absent loved ones cannot cross the chasm of loss that looms before our tear-filled eyes. They remind us of things we should be thankful for (and we are more thankful for many of those things than they can ever imagine). They prod us with their spears of delightful togetherness, never realizing that what they celebrate is what we cannot now enjoy. We would not dream of attacking them in these battles for holiday survival. With our noses pressed against the glass that divides us, we actually long to be able to be part of their happiness. We remember the times we joined in their fun and we, too, were part of their army of nostalgia and joy.

Our broken hearts and bleeding wounds do not excuse us from being gracious; however, while grief does not give us permission to be rude and selfish, and we take no overt action against their aggression, we are not without defenses in these battles. We can shield ourselves with the armor of dignity with kind but direct and simple explanations:” We understand your need for

celebration, but this year we prefer quiet and private reflections and meditations.” “Right now it’s hard for us to function in large groups and to appreciate laughter and high spirits.” “Our energy is so limited; we’d appreciate some quiet one-on-one time with you in a more spiritual atmosphere.” We can gently remind them of how important it is for us to remember those we love who are gone. These are statements that clarify our position without judging or criticizing them for theirs. In kind and non-threatening ways, we need to tell them what’s good for us, because they won’t think of it on their own, and they can use the education.

We also can exercise the muscles of our sense of humor. It will take some effort on our part, but so does anything that is worthwhile and good for us. We can teach ourselves not to fall into the trap of thinking that our grief makes us the center of the universe. We can limit our demands that others treat us in “special” and “deferential” ways because of our pain. We can cut them a little slack and remember that once upon a time, we were just like they are now. It’s good and healthy for us to review our perspectives now and then and decide if we’re being fair and reasonable.

We can express our love in simple and unhurried ways without all the frenetic, expensive and often hysterical hype that the holiday can generate. And we must exercise the expression of our love. Grief does not rob us of our ability to love; it reminds us ever more dramatically of our need to both give and receive love while we are here.

Whenever we can take some control in our situation, we empower ourselves, and then we feel less like victims in what seems like a war of “peace on earth, goodwill toward men.” Anytime we can educate and inform with mercy and compassion, we have given a truly spiritual holiday gift of love that will keep on giving forever.

May your season be filled with genuine blessings of peace.



## “Tinsel or Touch”

### Holiday Visits in the Hospital

Chaplain Robert L. Hansen D-Min  
Director Pastoral Care/Trinity Region Health System

**Illness, injury and hospitalizations have no respect for the holidays.** Thanksgiving and Christmas and New Year’s celebrations are coming sooner than one might imagine. You and I anticipate joy and being a blessing to others. We imagine the Norman Rockwell turkey feast, the gaily decorated Christmas tree with festive gifts underneath and the New Year’s dropping of the giant ball in Times Square. When the body is struck down in one way or the other, this can be considered an interruption of the normal life flow.

One might very well ask, **“What can I do to bring holiday cheer** to my loved one in the hospital, nursing home, and rehab center or to another who is sick at home?” The reverse can happen to a patient who is sick during the holidays. He or she can feel like an outsider. The journey to joy can be turned into a major challenge. Think of the Christmas story. Mary was a first time mother and unwed. She and her intended, Joseph, take the perilous journey to Bethlehem on a donkey, away from family and friends. The only place for them was a cave manger with animals. Their saving grace was having a mission which was to fulfill God’s plan of lifting up his Son as a gift. With their eyes on the Christ child they received guests guided by the Star. Since family was not available to them at this distant place, shepherds, kings and animal’s became their adopted family.

**If a loved one cannot normally participate** in the holidays, we can bring the family celebration to them. We have to be careful in the hospital because honored traditions of food, candles, large crowds of people and drinks may not be allowed. Remember, the most important gift you can bring is yourself. It is not so important what you say, as it is what the loved one has to say. A survey was taken in which patients were asked, “What do you fear the most about your hospitalization?” The top three answers were fear of pain, fear that no further treatment will help and the fear of being alone. The hospital experts can mediate the pain and will not give up on treatment. We who visit can help the aloneness. A positive attitude is powerful in the healing process.

**Some practical suggestions are to** pray together, read from the Bible, bring in favorite music with a player and headphones, invite a clergy call on the patient (chaplains can visit if a spiritual leader is not available), encourage others to visit, hold the person’s hand when appropriate, watch TV together (parades, celebrations, worship services and sporting events). If gifts are brought in, be prepared to take them home right away (clinical areas need to be clear and clean for healthcare reasons). Be mindful of other patients so as not to disturb them. Where appropriate include a roommate in the festivities. In the nursing home or private home there may be an opportunity to share with a larger group around the patient. Check it out and share the joy. When in doubt, ask the nurse or caregiver if what you intend to do is acceptable.

## Handling the Holidays

One of the more painful issues for you to deal with is how to survive the holidays after the death of a person you loved. Because holidays are supposed to be family times, and because of the extraordinary (although unrealistic) expectations that you should feel close to everyone, this time of the year can underscore the absence of your deceased loved one more than any other time. However, you do have options about how to cope with the holidays. These are a few things to keep in mind.

It will be wise for you to take control of the situation by facing it squarely and planning for what you do and do not want to do to get through this time.

Realize that the anticipation of pain at the holidays is always worse than the actual day.

Decide what is right for you and your family now. Don't worry about all the other holidays to come in years ahead. You can always go back to old traditions another year when it seems right. You will not have to do next year what you decided to do this year.

Ask yourself and loved ones what is really important for you to do to make the holidays meaningful and bearable. Through compromise and negotiation, see if everyone can get a little of what he or she wants and needs.

Do something symbolic. Think about including rituals that can appropriately symbolize your memory of your loved one. Rituals can help give you the continued presence of your deceased loved one while celebrating the holiday with those who still survive.

Realize that the holidays are filled with unrealistic expectations for intimacy, closeness, relaxation, and joy for all people—not just for the bereaved. Try not to buy into this.

Be aware of the pressures, demands, depression, increased alcohol intake, and fatigue that come with the holidays. As a bereaved person you may feel these more than others. Take time to care for yourself during this time.

Reevaluate family traditions. Ask yourself and surviving loved ones whether you need to carry them on this year or whether you should begin to develop some new ones. Perhaps you may want to have Thanksgiving dinner at your children's house instead of yours. Or you might open presents on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning.

Recognize that your loved one's absence will cause pain no matter what you do. Try to mix this with your love for those you still have and your positive memories of the past. You can feel the sweetness of the holiday, but also the bitterness of your loved one's absence. Together they can give you a full, right feeling, marked with love for those present and those gone whom you will never forget.

Plan ahead for shopping. Capitalize on good days and do as much as you can. If it seems too big a burden, use catalogs or ask friends to help.

Tears and sadness do not have to ruin the entire holiday for you. Let yourself have the cry you need and you will be surprised that you can go on again until the next time you need to release the tears. Let your tears and sadness come and go throughout the whole day if necessary.

Ask for what you want or need from others during the holidays. Everyone is busy and may be less likely to notice your needs, but may still want to help.

Let the memories of past holidays spent with your deceased loved one come. Talk about them. This is part of mourning and is usually intensified during the holidays.

Having fun during the holidays is not a betrayal of your loved one. You must give yourself permission to feel joy as well as sadness when you have the need.

Don't be forced into doing things you don't want to do or don't feel up to solely to keep others happy. Don't overwhelm or over commit yourself. Remember grieving takes a lot of energy and you will not have much to spare. Use it for what is really important to you.

Do something for someone else. Reaching out to others can bring you a sense of wellbeing. You can combine this with a memorial to your loved one. For example, donating something to charity in your loved one's name can be meaningful.

Pay attention to your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs and do whatever helps you get through this time

From [How to Go on Living When Someone you Love Dies](#) by Teresa Rando





## Holiday Grief – A Holiday Gift?

By Lynn Batcher

“And can it be that in a world so full and busy, the loss of one weak creature makes a void in any heart, so wide and deep that nothing but the width and depth of vast eternity can fill it up!”  
Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Sons*

It is generally acknowledged that holidays and other special occasions can be particularly difficult for those who are grieving a significant loss. Already in pain, bereaved people may experience an intensification of grief distress just at the thought of trying to “do” Thanksgiving, Christmas, Hanukkah or Eid Al Adha without the deceased loved one there.

Holidays are traditionally a time for gathering with family and friends, of celebrating the occasion, but also celebrating a sense of belonging and loving connection. Rituals which have continued virtually unchanged for many years tie into deep emotions and spark memories. For the mourner, being in a group of happy, celebrating people can be a very lonely experience. Being so out of step with others can heighten the sense of isolation many bereaved people already feel. The familiar rituals make a griever very aware of who is missing, of who is not at the table. Memories of how it used to be flood in bringing fresh awareness of the loss. Many books and articles have been written advising especially the newly bereaved of strategies and activities that may help to lessen the “holiday effect”. Many of these ideas can have positive results.

However, in my work with grieving individuals and families, I have found that despite the distress, the holidays may actually be an occasion for working toward reconciliation of the loss. Most people who dread the approach of a holiday report that the actual day turns out to be much better than expected. Observing the holiday often brings, if not joy, at least some fleeting moments of happiness.

Why is this? I think it has something to do with the nature of holidays and something to do with the nature of grief. I think it is because, painful as they may be, holidays give us a wonderful opportunity to work on the tasks of grieving. Grief counselors have identified certain tasks that need to be accomplished by mourners if they are to adjust to their losses. To make the adjustment from living in a world with the loved one to living in a world without the loved one we must work on four tasks. The bereaved must accept the reality of the loss, experience the feelings, convert the relationship from one of presence to one of memory and reinvest in a world without the deceased loved one. Of course, these tasks overlap. They are worked on simultaneously with some being more intensely engaged at certain times during the first few years after a loss. Holidays in some ways force us to confront these tasks. They present opportunities to make real progress on resolving them. How does this happen?

1. Accepting the reality of the loss

We human beings seem to need to push away painful realities. We resist acknowledging, not to mention accepting, that someone or something we love is gone. How many times do we chaplains hear a family member react to the news of the death of a loved one with “No, that can’t be! Or I can’t believe it’s true.” Or “No, there’s been

some mistake.” This sense of the unreality of the loss pervades the grief experience even when intellectually the loss has been acknowledged. Therefore, progress in the grief process depends upon the griever coming to accept that her loved one is indeed dead and will not be coming back.

The familiar activities of holiday seasons are a stark reminder of who isn't there, of the changes that must be made. No one thought much about all Mom did to get the house ready for Christmas until she wasn't there to do it. Mom loved Christmas Eve service but this year she isn't there. The losses must be confronted and baby steps toward acceptance taken.

## 2. Experiencing Grief

No one wants to experience pain, but avoiding the pain associated with loss indefinitely stalls the grieving process. Sadness, fear, guilt, depression are all normal responses to the death of a loved one. It takes tremendous energy to deny them, energy that can be better invested in adjusting to the changes the loss has brought. Opportunities to express the deep feelings in a safe, non-judgmental environment are essential to healthy grieving. This includes allowing tears to come and come and come. The only way beyond the painful feelings of grief is through them.

The rituals so associated with holidays stimulate the senses—music, smells, decorations, tastes bring feelings to the surface. Being with others who also grieve the same loss can bring comfort and community. The mourner may find that others are feeling very much as he is. He discovers that if he lets himself cry, he won't cry forever. He will stop and when he does, he will probably feel some release and relief.

A word of caution...All the parties going on can tempt the bereaved to self medicate her sadness with alcohol or other addictive substances. Although this may offer some temporary pain relief, when the chemical effects wear off, she will be more depressed than ever.

## 3. Converting the relationship from one of presence to one of memory

As life without the loved one moves on, the griever is constantly reminded of how large a space this person filled in his or her life. Every empty space must be acknowledged and negotiated. This is a very painful process filled with intense feeling. Ways have to be found to at least partially compensate for the absence of the loved one in each of those spaces. Grievers can gradually recognize that the relationship can continue although in the form of memory, rather than physical presence.

Holidays are prime times for memory sharing. Often the memories include people who have died, maybe many years ago. As people are remembered they become present in a real way. A son who lost his father 20 years ago hears others tell a story about Dad. Through the story Dad is there with them and it's a good feeling. It reassures him that his Mom who died 3 months ago will also remain present to him through memories. Neither Mom nor Dad will be forgotten by family and friends.

4. Withdrawing emotional energy focused on the deceased and reinvesting it in other relationships

Instead of focusing solely on what is lost, gradually the bereaved person begins to remember the goodness still present in his or her world. New activities are explored and enjoyed. Although a mourner can experience an intense resurgence of grief for many years after a loss, these experiences come more infrequently, are less intense and pass more quickly as time goes on. The griever begins to feel “more like herself” again. She is able to reengage with life.

Holiday time is usually packed with gatherings and celebrations of all sorts. Although the newly bereaved needs to be careful to conserve his energy, attending a few of these events can remind him that he still has caring people in his life. He may meet new people who may introduce him to new interests. Even if he isn't up to trying these things yet, an idea may be planted that he will choose later to explore. The many religious and charitable activities that surround holidays can help the griever remember that others are in distress too. Becoming involved in a project which helps others is therapeutic. As an old saying goes, “Warm baths and good deeds are the best cures for depression.”

Even though the loss of a loved one can bring our personal world to a stop, the rest of life goes on and holidays and special occasions like anniversaries and birthdays will inevitably come. We can prepare as well as possible. There are many resources which can help keep them from causing unnecessary pain. However the difficult experience of working through the holidays can be a big step along the grief journey. The holidays, themselves may turn out to be the best gift of all.



## Honoring the Loved One

The following are a few suggestions for the holidays and may be adapted and modified for a variety of occasions.

1. **Food Donations**  
During the holidays many civic and religious groups collect food for the less fortunate. Donations may be in the form of food stuffs, paper goods, or monetary. Give a donation in the name of your loved one.
2. **Clothing Donations**  
As the temperature falls there are those in need of warm clothing. Consider buying an article of clothing and donate it in your loved one's name. (Children are often in special need. Contact your local school to see if they have a scarf and mittens program. If they do not, talk to them about starting one.)
3. **Memorial Flowers**  
Churches and synagogues often have memorial gardens during the holidays. Consider placing a flower in the garden in remembrance of your loved one. Often these are then taken to shut-ins, nursing homes, or hospitals.
4. **"A Toast"**  
Create a special toast for your loved one, using your loved one's favorite beverage. This can then be offered at a family gathering or when you are alone.
5. **Living Trees**  
With the trend toward renewable resources, many people are planting a tree as a living memorial for their loved one. These trees may also be decorated for the season.
6. **Making Special Gifts**  
Gift giving holds a special place in many traditions. Gifts are given for special holidays and birthdays. Consider making a special gift (cookies, candy, or lap robes) and take them to a nursing home, domestic violence shelter, or other charitable institution.
7. **Memorial Candle**  
Candle light has often served as a symbol of hope and security. Consider placing (or making) a special candle and place it on a table. You can chose to light it each morning or evening and extinguish only before going to bed. Its light can serve as a reminder of the presence of your loved one in your heart.
8. **Ornaments**  
Consider placing a special ornament on your tree in memory of your loved one. Often times at craft shows, vendors will personalize ornaments they have made for you.
9. **Observe a Moment of Silence**  
Take a moment before the meal or at another time you deem appropriate and pause. This may be a moment of silence or a time for sharing memories.

10. Sharing Memories  
Consider sharing a special memory of your loved one with another family member or friend. This may be as a line in a card or even wrapped up as a gift.
11. Family Albums  
Set aside time to look through the family album or watch family movies. Make it a special celebration when the past is reviewed and re-lived.
12. Religious Decorations  
Help decorate your place of worship for the holidays.
13. Talk About Your Loved One  
Set aside time to talk about your loved one with family and friends.
14. Meals  
Set a place for your loved one at the table. A picture may be placed at their place.
15. Talk to Your Loved One  
Holidays are often a time to catch up with family and friends on what has been happening in our lives. Talk with your loved one as if they are there. Let them know what has been happening in your life. This could be done by placing a picture of them in a chair or on the table across from you.
16. Charity Donation  
Make a donation to a charity in the name of your loved one. This could be a charity that reminds you of them or supports an interest that was important to your loved one.
17. Opening Gifts  
Take time while opening gifts to share how your love one contributed to the quality of your life. Remember the gifts they had given you.
18. Special Dishes  
Special Dishes, either prepared by or liked by our loved ones, are filled with memories. Continue the preparation (you might even teach it to another) or include the dish with your holiday meal.
19. Luminaries  
Participate in or establish a luminary service to honor and celebrate the memory of your loved one. This may be a community event or done at your place of worship.
20. Volunteer  
For people alone, the holidays often increase the feeling of isolation and loneliness. Consider contacting a charity group that sponsors a holiday meal and offer to volunteer.

Shalom  
Peace

## Activities for Children (and Families)

Children grieve too. However, children express their grief in ways that adults do not always recognize. Sometimes adults inadvertently discourage children from doing the things they need to do to process their feelings of loss. The following are activities that can help children express their thoughts and feelings and preserve the memory of the person they have lost.

1. Go through photo albums and gather pictures of your loved one taken at holiday time. Arrange them in a scrapbook or a poster with a holiday theme. Talk together about the occasion when each picture was taken.
2. Make a holiday card or gift for the person who has died. After the holiday take it to a charity.
3. Cut strips of holiday colored paper. On each strip write something you loved about this person. Make each strip into a loop and then link them all together in a chain. Hang the chain in your room.
4. Cut strips of paper. On each strip write something about this person. Fold each strip and put them into a small gift box. Tie a ribbon around the "present". When you miss the person, open the box and remember the "gift" that person was.
5. With pictures from magazines and assorted small objects, make a collage about the person you miss.
6. Make a snugly. Draw a heart or other shape on a piece of paper. Cut it out and use it for a pattern. Using this pattern and fabric from a piece of clothing worn by the deceased, cut out two pieces of fabric in the shape of your pattern. With right sides together, sew around the edges leaving a two inch opening. Turn right side out and stuff with polyester filling or old hosiery.

## Holiday Memorial Ritual

The lighting of candles during the holiday season is significant to both the Jewish and Christian community. This service is adaptable to all faiths.

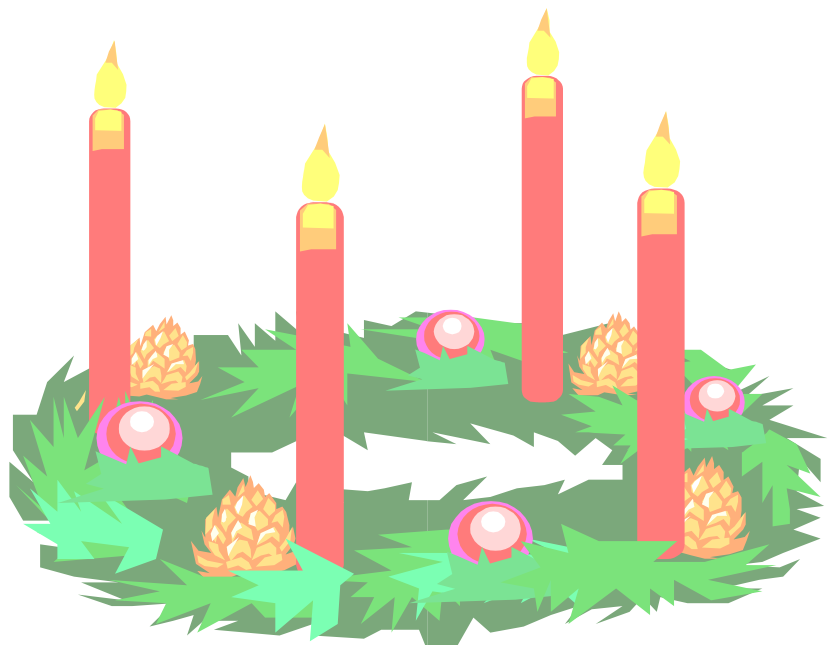
As we light these four candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories, and one for our love.

This candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

This candle represents our courage – to confront our sorrow – to comfort each other, to change our lives.

This light is in your memory – the times we laughed, the times we cried, the time we were angry with each other, the silly thing you did, the caring and joy you gave us.

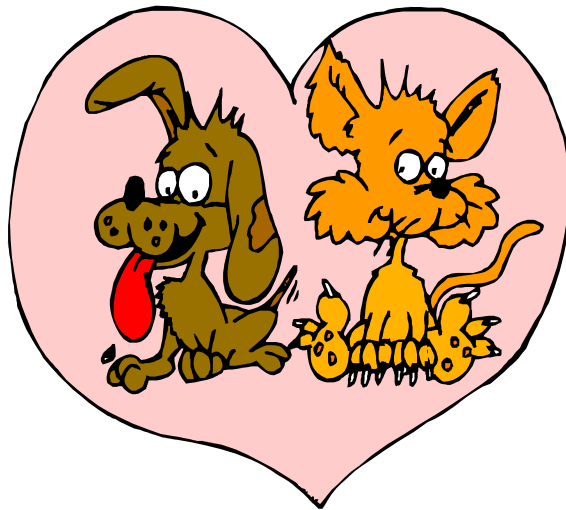
This light is the light of love. As we enter this time of remembering and celebration, day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought – for the lessons you taught – for the time shared – for the love you gave. We love you and celebrate you now and forever.



## Pet Loss During the Holidays

The holidays can be a difficult time if you are mourning the loss of a pet. For many of us our pets are an important and treasured part of our lives and not having them with us at the holidays and at other times that you have the right to grieve the loss of your pet. Grieving for a pet can be an isolating experience; our society isn't very good at supporting mourners, and that's especially true if you are mourning the loss of a pet. It can be helpful to seek out friends and family that have gone through a similar loss; they may be better able to understand your feelings and your need to talk about your pet.

The internet has many resources for someone going through the loss of a pet. The site [www.pet-loss.net](http://www.pet-loss.net) has lots of helpful information. The College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Illinois operates a helpline offering live telephone support for those who have experienced, or are about to experience, the loss of a pet. They are available Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings from 7-9pm central time. They can be reached (toll-free) at 877-394-2273. If you feel the need to memorialize your pet in a special way, there are many animal-related charitable organizations that can use support. A memorial made in your pets name can be a fitting tribute.





## Thoughts from those who have been there...

Christmas is not an easy time to do the work of remembering, crying, and feeling sad. But I encourage you to do it anyway. Don't worry about what anybody else thinks. Take the time you need to grieve your loss. Barbara Schmitz

Never apologize for choosing what will nurture you. Harold Smith

One thing you can do is start some new tradition that is so different from old celebrations that it has no painful memories for you. Helen Fitzgerald

Because my son's birthday always fell very close to Thanksgiving Day, we always had his birthday dinner on Thanksgiving...He always loved it...The first Thanksgiving after my son died, my husband, my daughter, and I determined we wanted no part of old traditions that day....We steered clear of family and friends and had dinner at the Benihana of Tokyo restaurant. You can't get much further away from tradition than that. But it was what we needed to do that year. Mary Cleckley

A sorrow that has no vent in tears makes other organs weak. Henry Maudsley

Tears are natural seasonings of the season. Harold Smith

God is closest to those with broken hearts. Jewish proverb

Do you really enjoy all the rituals that have become second nature to you at Christmas, or have they become habits? Jo Robinson

On this first Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Years Eve without your loved one, give yourself permission to take a time-out from all the clamor of the season. Give yourself a gift: some moments of silence. Then at the end of the holiday, raise your right hand over your left shoulder and give yourself a pat on the back. You made it through! Harold Smith

For some griever, the mere thought of holiday gift shopping brings on great distress and anxiety....Some alternative ways to shop this season include phone orders, catalog-based purchases, or shopping early in the season before the stores are filled with holiday shoppers. Victor Parachin

Every new thing that happened, I thought I would die! But I didn't!  
A griever named Judy

Remember you aren't Martha Stewart and more than likely she isn't coming to your house this season. Harold Smith (Especially this year!)

A question for the season: Are you stuffing your face or stuffing your grief?  
Harold Smith

Come to my defense, O God. They're trying to tell me how to grieve. Tell them to leave me alone. Ann Weems

Giving ourselves time to heal and creating space for the process allows the painful memories to be replaced gradually by more pleasant ones. The pain subsides, and one remembers the whole relationship, not just the most recent memories of illness and death. We make peace with what was unresolved.

Anne Brener

I don't know how many more holiday seasons I'll celebrate in this life. But I know that when I wade the wide river into the real Kingdom, every day will be Christmas! Harold Smith

In this season of light, remember the light your loved one has brought to your life. Light a special candle—not in memory of a death, but in celebration of a life and a love shared. Spend a moment in a quiet prayer of thanksgiving for having loved and been loved by this person. Darcie Sims



## **Give What's Left of Me Away**

Now that I'm gone,  
Remember me with a smile and laughter.  
And if you need to cry,  
Cry with your brother or sister  
Who walks in grief beside you.

And when you need me,  
Put your arms around anyone  
And give to them  
What you need to give to me.

There are so many  
Who need so much.  
I want to leave you something.  
Something much better  
Than words or sounds.

Look for me  
In the people  
I've known and loved or helped  
In some special way.  
Let me live in your heart  
As well as your mind.

You can love me most  
By letting your love  
Reach out to our loved ones.  
By embracing them  
And living in their love.

Love does not die,  
People do.  
So, when all that's left of me is love,  
Give me away as best you can.

Author Unknown