

Preface

When a loved one dies, it forever changes our universe, and in many cases, alters the way that we view the world, our values, and priorities. The pain that occurs when a loved one dies is mind numbing and affects us physically, emotionally and cognitively. Many people expect us to negotiate the change in our lives due to loss over a set period of time, usually six months to a year. If our grief exceeds a year, it may be seen as abnormal and a sign that we have emotional problems.

In reality, the majority of individuals who experience significant losses due to death are psychologically healthy individuals. In reality is the fact that in many cases, the grief process is lifelong. A persons' ability to navigate the grief journey is measured by their ability to adjust and be redefined by their loss rather than to put closure to it. The adjustment process is facilitated by their ability to hang on to the memories of their loved ones and to find meaning and significance in the aftermath of their losses.



Introduction

The pain of grief tends to surface with great intensity during certain “milestone events.” Birthdays, anniversaries and holidays are the typical milestone events that are usually associated with the grief journey. Of course, there may be other events such as weddings and graduations which qualify as well. The intensity of grief is usually highest for many during the first year that these typical milestone events are experienced. However, people will experience pain of varying intensity during these milestone events beyond the first year. Should we be concerned? No, because there is no timetable to resolve our grief and in many cases our journeys are lifelong. Experiencing pain at any time during this process is to be expected. As the years pass, we learn to adjust to the presence of pain and sadness while learning to find joy again.

Here are some additional observations that we have of the grief process:

- You can't control when grief hits you, no matter how hard you try.
- Everyone grieves at their own pace and in their own way.
- Our deceased loved ones are always with us, and we can still have relationships with them.
- Time doesn't always heal, but gives us an

opportunity to adjust to a new reality.

-In time, you will have more good days than bad.

-Do not underestimate the power of a really good support network.

-Grief may make you feel crazy, but it doesn't mean you are crazy.

-The grief journey is never linear, but it is always circular.

In this book, we will focus on typical holiday milestone events that individuals who are grieving experience, the challenges and ways to effectively cope. Personal stories will also be shared to illustrate these challenges and coping strategies.

We hope that what you read in the following pages will help you navigate through the grief of the holiday season and provide hope that you will not only survive your losses but learn to thrive as a result of the struggle.

Holiday Grief



*The significance of the holiday is
to be thankful for what one has in life.*

-Karen Sunde

No matter where you are in your grief journey, it is inevitable that you will find yourself embarking on a new unfamiliar challenge. Getting through the first holiday season!