

## **How to Deal With Grief During the Holidays** by Amy Morin in Psychology Today (excerpts)

### **Trust That Grief Is Part of Healing**

Grief is the process by which you heal. Experiencing the pain—rather than constantly trying to escape it—can actually help you feel better in the long-term. So while it may be tempting to pretend the holidays don't exist—or to numb the pain with alcohol—temporarily avoiding the pain only prolongs the anguish.

### **Focus on What You Can Control.**

Think about what you can do to lessen the heartache when you can. It's OK to limit your decorations or shop for presents online only. Pick a few things you can do to assert some control over the holiday cheer, and keep in mind that life goes on for other people and it's OK that they're happy to celebrate this year.

### **Plan Ahead**

Often, it's helpful to create an escape plan. Drive yourself to holiday functions or ride with a trusted friend who will take you home whenever you want. Just knowing you can easily leave at any time can help you enjoy the activity much more than you would if you felt stuck.

### **Allow Yourself to Feel a Range of Emotions**

The holidays can bring about a wide range of emotions. You might feel joy, guilt, and sadness all within a few minutes. Allow yourself to feel those emotions without judging yourself or thinking you should be happy or you shouldn't be laughing.

### **Find a Way to Honor Your Memories**

Create a special way to memorialize the person you've lost. Whether you decide to light a candle every night or eat your loved one's favorite food, honoring your loved one can serve as a tangible reminder that although your loved one is gone, the love never dies.

### **Do Something Kind for Others**

Even when you're in the midst of grief, you still have something to offer the world. Performing a few acts of kindness can be really good for a grieving person's spirit. Donate gifts to families in need, serve meals at a soup kitchen, or volunteer to help people at a nursing home make holiday crafts if you're up for it.

### **Ask for Help**

Don't be afraid to ask for help when you're struggling with the holidays. Reminding loved ones that you're having a rough time may be enough, but you also may want to reach out for more support. Look for support groups or contact a professional counselor to help you deal with your grief in a healthy manner.

## **Death Is Nothing At All** By Henry Scott-Holland

Death is nothing at all.

It does not count.

I have only slipped away into the next room.

Nothing has happened.

Everything remains exactly as it was.

I am I, and you are you,

and the old life that we lived so fondly together is untouched, unchanged.

Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.

Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.

Put no difference into your tone.

Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes that we enjoyed together.

Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word that it always was.

Let it be spoken without an effort, without the ghost of a shadow upon it.

Life means all that it ever meant.

It is the same as it ever was.

There is absolute and unbroken continuity.

What is this death but a negligible accident?

Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?

I am but waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near, just round the corner.

All is well.

Nothing is hurt; nothing is lost.

One brief moment and all will be as it was before.

How we shall laugh at the trouble of parting when we meet again!



Introducing .....

Grief Support live chat

Every Wednesday 4 – 7 p.m. (Eastern)

A Bereavement Coordinator is available to chat with anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one.

Join us through the website:

**capitalcityhospice.com**

Choose “Grief support” tab

**Secondary Loss – one loss isn't enough!!** By Litsa Williams, *What's Your Grief*, website

When we experience death the grief associated with the loss itself is excruciating. There are the obvious things we "expect" (though it is hard to describe anything with grief as expected). In the immediate, the pain of the loss can be all-consuming. But in the weeks and months that follow there can be a sense that we are losing even more than just that person. The world turns upside down and suddenly it feels like everything is changing or disappearing. Understanding the possibility of experiencing grief from these secondary losses can help build self-awareness and help identify complexities of our own grief. Once we have identified these losses we are better equipped to face and mourn them. We begin to understand that the whole of our grief is comprised of many parts, including the primary loss and the secondary losses.

So, what are secondary losses? These losses are all unique to our own relationship with the person we have lost, personality, life situation, and other relationships.

**The easiest to identify are often the loss of concrete things. Some of these common concrete losses are** loss of income, loss of home, loss of a business, and/or loss of financial security.

**Another type is a loss of identity. This can come from a change in how one defines oneself, as well as certain roles that may be lost as a result of the death. Some of these losses can include:** *Loss of relational identity* (no longer a husband, wife, parent, sibling, grandparent, etc), *Loss of role as caregiver, New role as a caregiver* (at the expense of other things), *Loss of life purpose* (no longer a parent, no longer a caregiver), *Loss of self-confidence*.

**Over time there can be other losses that arise:** loss of memories as they begin to fade, loss associated with giving away the belongings of the person, the pain of watching others grieve the loss (children, parents), a loss at important milestones (weddings, anniversaries, births, graduations without that person), learning

difficult or unpleasant things about the person who died.

As you may have gathered from this list, these secondary losses can unfold over time. There may be some you are acutely aware of immediately following a loss, and some may arise as the weeks, months, and years pass. Being aware that these secondary losses may arise can help us self-assess when we are caught off guard by a new feeling of loss or pain. These secondary losses are a normal part of our grief and need to be addressed and mourned.

So, what can we do? I wish I could give you an easy answer, but unfortunately, there is no single answer to that question. A huge first step is acknowledging these secondary losses and their impact. In order to mourn a loss, we have to start by recognizing that loss. How we will mourn and adapt will vary depending on who we are and what the loss is. Once you have identified these losses, consider other tools that work well for you in coping with grief. We are huge proponents of finding creative ways to express the pain of losses through writing, photography, and other creative expressions. Finding a support group with others who have experienced a similar loss (loss of a spouse, child, etc) may be helpful, as they may share similar secondary losses (though not necessarily). Finally, begin looking for ways to take action to adapt to these losses. Though this can feel impossible at first, start by looking for little ways to take action and adapt.

*Grief never ends ...*

*But it changes.*

*It's a passage,*

*Not a place to stay.*

*Grief is not a sign of weakness,*

*Nor a lack of faith ...*

*It is the price of*

**LOVE.**

Author Unknown