

## Quick Links

[Hollandhospice.org](http://Hollandhospice.org)

[YoungWidow.org](http://YoungWidow.org)  
book lists, online resources  
and support

[GriefNet.org](http://GriefNet.org)  
online support groups

[GROWW.org](http://GROWW.org)  
online bereaved community

[wpsgr.org](http://wpsgr.org)  
Grand Rapids Widowed persons  
service: local groups and support

[Dougy.org](http://Dougy.org)  
website for children, teens and  
parents following a loss

[WebHealing.com](http://WebHealing.com)  
grief resources

[Centering.org](http://Centering.org)  
grief resources and books

[Griefshare.org](http://Griefshare.org)  
nationwide grief support  
program; find one nearby

[Griefwatch.com](http://Griefwatch.com)  
resource for more websites

[Griefwords.com](http://Griefwords.com)

[widowconnection.com](http://widowconnection.com)

It is perfectly okay to admit  
you're not okay.

-Unknown

## The Journey of Grief

You are on the journey of grief. This journey is not one you chose and is not one you can choose to avoid. Much like the continued turning of the calendar and changing of the seasons, grief sweeps you up and in without permission. Because you are an individual with your own personality and distinct relationship with your person, your journey of grief is unique to you; remember, though, that you do not walk the path alone. The Hospice of Holland Bereavement Team is here to assist you. We hope you receive this newsletter as a reminder you are not alone and find in it helpful articles and resources, as well as reminders of upcoming events.

## Grief & COVID-19

As it has everything else, COVID-19 will likely change the ways holidays are experienced this year. With guidelines on physical distancing and group sizes, gatherings of all kinds will look different. Fewer hugs and more masks will change the feel and flow of times together. It is important to allow yourself to grieve those changes if needed. It is equally important to find safe ways to connect socially with those who are most important to you and who understand what you might be experiencing.

If you have any concerns about how your grief is manifesting, please contact a bereavement counselor. Being heard and validated can go a long way in alleviating the additional burden you might be carrying in this season.

## Seasons of Grief and Healing

The holiday season is often a time of lightheartedness, family gatherings, joy, and bustling activity. More than any other time of year, November and December include an increased pressure to spend time with others, and to do so willingly and with joy. As a griever, you might recognize within yourself that meeting those expectations is more difficult this year. In fact, grievers often respond to holiday demands in one of two ways: isolate and avoid, or plaster on a fake smile and pretend all is well. Unfortunately, neither of those options allows for genuine forward movement in grief, and can even result in the opposite. To that end, the Bereavement Team put together the following list of tools to help navigate grief in the midst of holiday expectations.

**Create Space** Grief needs room to breathe and to be expressed. As you prepare for the holiday season, determine what kind of space you need to honor your grief, and be intentional about protecting it. Do

Continued...

## Seasons of Grief and Healing *Continued*

you need a few moments each morning and each night to express and reflect? Maybe simply safeguarding a day each week as an “obligation free day” will suffice. Or, maybe you need to build in a regular time to meet with significant, safe people in your life who understand that your grief doesn’t disappear for the holidays. Whether an option listed here, a combination thereof, or something else, take a few minutes to create your space. Then write down that intention to hold yourself accountable.

**Be Your Own Social Director** Have you ever noticed that during the holidays people often tell you when something is, rather than asking if it works for you? Practically speaking this makes sense, but, as a griever, it is difficult to remember that you have the right to say no. Also, when you say yes, you can choose when to leave, even if you’re ready only five minutes after arriving. Bonus tip: never park in a driveway. Parking on the street or in a parking lot allows you to leave on short notice without drawing unwanted attention.

**Make Soft Plans** As you know, grief waves don’t tend to give notice. You might have an event on your calendar with full intention of attending, then, a few hours before, you realize you just can’t handle it today. That is okay; you have every right to change your mind.

**Strike a Balance** In the moments you can, enjoy time with others as much as possible. Soak up their energy and allow yourself a break from grief emotions. You deserve that break, and enjoying a brief escape from it in no way diminishes the love you have for your person.

**Practice Self Care** Stick with the basics in the holiday season: get the amount of sleep you need, eat well, move your body, and honor your emotions with expression (tears, yelling, laughing, etc.).

In summary, you do not need to change how you embrace your grief because it is the holiday season. The offered tools will help you find a way to make the season what you need it to be. Remember, what you do this year does not need to become the new tradition; focus on what you need this year and let next year take care of itself in due course. The enclosed handout, “My Holiday Plan”, will further assist in sorting activities into needs and wants, and also serves as a communication guide when talking with friends and family.

## Holiday Grief Support Events

**Helpful Hints for Grieving in the Holiday Season** - Follow Hospice of Holland on Facebook to view our five-part video series providing ideas and tips on how to handle grief during the holidays.

**Surviving the Holidays** - This two hour support event is hosted by several West Michigan churches. To find an event near you, go to the website [www.griefshare.org/holidays](http://www.griefshare.org/holidays)

Memories are powerful. Your memories of the experiences you shared with your loved one can make the past a significant part of who you are in the present. As you attempt to move to the other side of grief, you will need to learn how to store these memories in your heart and mind in such a way that you can recall them accurately but at the same time no longer feel the emotional pain associated with them.”

From The Empty Chair:  
Handling Grief on Holidays and  
Special Occasions,  
Susan J. Zonnebelt-Smeenge  
and Robert C. DeVries.



Please remember that Hospice of Holland bereavement counselors are available to help you in your grieving process. Contact our office at 616.396.2972, if you are interested in speaking to a counselor.