

The Monthly Haven



Safe Haven For Widowed

*Giving Comfort and Support
To All Those
With Grieving Hearts
that have lost loved ones.*

Available 24/7 365 days a year
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December 6th , 2014	

*Happy Holidays
From
All of Us At
Safehavenforwidowed.org*

Our Holiday Wish List For You.

“Happy Hanukkah,” they say. “Merry Christmas,” they repeat. “Joyous Kwanza,” they wish. But for some of us, happy and merry and joy are the remotest emotions of our heart. Especially during this season. Too many memories. Too many traditions. Too much pain. The empty chair at the table. The one less present under the tree.

The voice that filled the room with laughter is now silent. While some sing that “It’s the most wonderful time of the year,” we feel conflicted because it seems to be not so wonderful for us.

If you are looking for a magic solution for finding happiness and merriness in this season, you won’t find it. There is no magic solution. To get through the pain, you have to go through the pain. As the children’s song says, you can’t go over it, around it, or under it. You have to go through it. But even though there is no magic solution, there are five wishes that we have for you this holiday season that though you may not have Happy Holidays, that at the very least, you will experience Healthy Holidays when it comes to grief.

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1. We wish for you to be authentic this holiday season.

When it seems like the whole world is joyful, allow yourself to experience the pain of your loss.

With all of your power, resist the temptation to feel guilty for not being happy. Simply embrace the pain. Don't try to squelch it. Don't try to repress it.

Don't try to forget about it. Embrace it. You have experienced a very painful event and you have every right in the world to be sad, no matter what season it is.

2. We wish for you to be congruent this holiday season.

There is, as you know, a huge temptation to put on a happy face during this season. It's the time to be jolly after all and no one wants to be like the Grinch.

You are supposed to be happy during the holidays, you tell yourself. You don't want to be a wet blanket on others holidays, you exhort yourself. So you wrestle with the temptation to smile on the outside though you're crying on the inside. Our wish for you is to be congruent to be the same on the outside as you are on the inside.

If you don't feel like smiling, don't smile. If you don't feel like laughing, don't laugh. But on the other hand, if you do feel like smiling, then by all means smile and laugh. Be who you are. Don't fake it.

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3. We wish for you to be gracious this holiday season.

Sometimes, those who are grieving feel a sense of anger rush through their veins when watching others who are not grieving. Sometimes watching others who are happy can just downright make us mad. “How can they be happy when they know I am sad?” “It’s not fair that they get to have their loved one this holiday season and I don’t.” “Why do they get to be so blessed and I’m not!”

Anger is very common for the grieving especially during the holidays. Anger, however, is a secondary emotion. It always has its roots in another emotion such as fear, hurt, shame, loneliness, and many others. So our wish for you is to be gracious with yourself as you identify why you are angry and then to be gracious with others to let them authentically and congruently experience what they are experiencing. In the end, you already know that the anger you have really isn’t hurting them anyway. It is only hurting you. So give yourself the gift of graciousness.

4. We wish for you a fruitful memory this holiday season.

The tendency, we know, is to try to forget because of all of the painful feelings that flood our soul when we remember. Yet as painful as they may be, memories are amazing healers.

They remind us of how thankful we are for the times that we have had and keep us connected in relationship with our loved one. So instead of acting as if the events of the past never happened, honor the past by allowing your memories to run rampant.

Some suggestions we have heard for this are: make an ornament with your loved one’s picture, cook your loved one’s favorite meal in their honor, donate money in your loved one’s name to a cause they believed in, create a scrapbook of holiday pictures of you and your loved one, read a poem or prayer in your loved one’s honor, light a candle for your loved one, watch your loved one’s favorite movie,

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volunteer at a soup kitchen or other charity, etc. Whatever you do, let your memory be fruitful as you honor your loved one and what they have meant to you.

5. We wish for you health this holiday season.

Obviously we hope that you won't get sick this season, but it's not physical health that we are talking about here. It is mental health. If you are really struggling, we hope you will reach out for help.

Especially if you are having thoughts about harming yourself or another, using alcohol or non-prescribed medications to ease your troubled emotions, isolating yourself from all relationships, you suspect you might be experiencing mental illness, or you don't have a support system to help you along in your grief journey.

If any of these apply to you, we strongly encourage you to reach out for help by calling your doctor and/or setting up an appointment with a counselor. If you need help during the time that your doctor or counselor are not in, go to the nearest ER.

Whatever you do, get the help you need when you need it.

Also our website is available 24/7 and run by volunteers who have also have had losses who are traveling on this journey with you or have, may not be doctors, lawyers, counselors but do get it and understand and very supportive and friendly.

You're not alone we have been there and we are here.

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Here I am again....

By Linda LaPlante... lindana



Here I am again....

The first time, June 9 2011, that phone call.... there has been an accident. I'm sorry; your son did not make it.

How can that be?? Al was so happy, so young, had worked so hard to make a good life for him. WHY??

That was more than 3 years ago now. The fog had lifted, the rollercoaster was still going but I had learned what to expect,

well, as much as we can learn what to expect with grief.

I knew the pain in my heart and soul would never leave. I knew a wave of grief would hit me out of the blue but I knew it would not last as long as it had before. I had learned if I let myself feel the grief, cry, scream, sob, pray, get angry and then remember the good.

The laughter, the happiness that those bad moments would pass. My faith told me Al was with God. My 4 leaf clovers told me Al was with me. I could feel Al close to me, and I know I am very blessed to have that, for many do not get the signs that I have been blessed to get from my son Al.

After Dana and I lost Al, some people had told me that was their worst fear, to lose one of their children. My worst fear was that I would lose Dana, my beloved husband. We had already lost our only child. Just the thought of losing Dana.... well, I would not even let myself go there.

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How could that happen, God had already brought Al up to heaven, Dana and I would grow old together, help each other through our grief for our son. Spend time just the two of us loving each other so very much.

But here I am.... that phone call. There has been an accident. Dana is at the hospital, here is the phone number. I'll get the doctor for you.... brain bleed, brain trauma, sending to Green Bay WI trauma center. Calling my parents, mom having to find my dad, he's shopping.

Knock on the door. Mike the manager from Coke. He will drive me the 2 hours down there.

As I was throwing things into a bag, God whispered to me... you need the advance directive.

I knew it was bad. Still I held out hope that my Dana would come back to me. Knew it would be a long hard road to recovery, but still hope and pray it would happen.

13 days... our number is 13, we were married on the 13th, our 13th wedding anniversary was on a Friday the 13th, and we loved it. But each day, there was less. Each day even tho I still held out hope, I knew. But I also knew what Dana would want because we had many talks about end of life and quality of life. We filled out the very easy paperwork that you can get at any hospital or doctor's office I think.

If you take anything from my story remember this part. Please talk to your loved ones of all ages about end of life choices for yourself, your family, and for the young.

The young will then know what the older wanted and that may help them process better what happened. The older kids can let you know what they would want. And the adults can really get it down and on free legal papers what they want so you do not have to guess what you should do should it happen, and I pray it does not happen to you.

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Here I am again....

By :Linda LaPlante... lindana

So now here I am again. So very deep within the fog. Knowing enough now so that I know I am not going crazy, but, then again, not so sure about that. Now not only is my son gone, but my husband. All the things that have to be done. He took such good care of me. I was so spoiled. But what bills are due and when? Where is this or that paperwork? How do I use the snowplow? I have to remember to check the mail box. No more calls... do you need anything from the store on my way home from work?

I am fighting the fog so I can at least get the bills, paperwork sorted a bit. And I did manage to do a not to bad job of plowing the snow out of the driveway. But I know soon the fog will really hit. After the service, after his family goes back to Maine. Then I can let the fog roll in.

I can let my body, mind, and soul rest a bit. Try to heal, try not to try to make sense out of this all.

I have always believed everything happens for a reason. God showed me a reason for Al in a dream.

So far, no message's from or about Dana, I pray for one.

So I have been here before, and I know many of you also have been here more than once.

I have some idea what to expect. But as with each person, each grief journey is different.

Each relationship is different so what we go through will not be a carbon copy of what we went through before.

But this time, I am thankful I already have my support system, my family, my friends, in person and online. That will help, has helped.

Where do I go from here... the same as we all do, baby steps, some backwards, some forward.

One moment at a time, one breath at a time.

Life is precious we mustn't waste it. Sometimes the water of life tastes bad, but we mustn't waste it.

Linda LaPlante... lindana

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Helping Children Cope With Death



Successful grieving after the untimely and violent death of a loved one is an extremely difficult task.

It is difficult to accept that no one is immune from danger in the world, that we cannot control the irresponsible actions of others. We would like to tell our children that the world is fair and just, but it is not so. Adults and children alike must realize that painful things happen. It is impossible to live without hurt.

Young children view adults as powerful and wise beings who can do anything. Adult “truths” become permanently etched in their impressionable minds.

Loving adults do not want children to hurt and may therefore disguise the truth about death. In an effort to protect children, adults may actually do them harm. Children are exposed to death regularly and need continuing education from adults to understand all that death entails.

Many things influence children’s views on death. Age, religious beliefs, cultural or ethnic values, and their relationship to the deceased person are important factors that affect their understanding. The reactions of the surviving parent or caregivers are of primary importance, however, in determining how children will cope with death.

Telling children about the death of a loved one in an impaired driving crash is the beginning of a long process of sharing. Children, like adults, differ widely in their reactions to death. They are not, however, miniature adults. They have their own distinct ways of perceiving reality and viewing the world.

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Understanding how children conceptualize death within the context of their prospective age ranges may help parents and caregivers in coping with this process.

Infants and Toddlers

Infants can sense when something is amiss following the death of their primary caregiver. Although a death in the family may affect an infant, the absence of the mother causes a clear biological reaction. However, this can be remedied very quickly if another caregiver assumes primary responsibility for the infant's care. Passing infants from caregiver to caregiver, however, may cause anxiety due to the fluctuation and inconsistency of care and is not recommended.

Infants and toddlers can sense the absence of a primary caregiver, but cannot understand explanations of death.

Older infants are beginning to see themselves as separate from their parents or caregivers, and this separation can be frightening. They may grieve for a lost relationship through anger, crying, searching, lack of appetite, and finally, quiet resignation. Grief becomes consumed by a complete dependence on life support, juxtaposed by a loss of security. A child of two years can feel grief and anxiety in their surroundings and will require frequent touching and holding for reassurance. Because he/she cannot understand explanations of death, explanations of death are meaningless. What one does is far more important than what one says to a child this young. Generally, a grieving infant or toddler needs large doses of tender loving care: holding, cuddling, and stroking. A child this young can only experience the presence or absence of another.

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Age's Four to Six

Like infants and toddlers, children this age have a great need for physical nurturing and the security of knowing who will care for them. They are learning to express themselves verbally, but are most effective in expressing themselves through play. Although significant events such as birthdays, holidays, and the first day of school are major milestones to young children, they tend to have a poor concept of time and space.

“**M**agical thinking” is an important characteristic of four to six-year old development. A child may fly to the moon, fight monsters, and cook dinner for a hundred guests in the course of a few minutes of play. A child in this age group is capable of a nearly endless variety of fantasies. However, most fantasies are based on something the child has seen or heard, even though it was misunderstood.

Children age's four to six are concrete thinkers and understand death best when explained in physical terms.

Bereaved children in this age group have a limited and literal understanding of death. Their thinking is concrete. A child this age believes that if anything is active, it is alive. A wind-up toy seems alive when it moves, and a child might cry when it stops performing. A stuffed animal seems alive during play because it has assumed life-like characteristics.

A limited concept of time added to a limited concept of death means that when a loved one dies, the child may expect the deceased to be alive again soon. Children may accept the news of the death in a matter-of-fact manner and may speak of the death or deceased person in the same detached way they speak of a playmate or pet.

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If the dead loved one was a parent or caregiver, the child's primary worry will be about who will care for him/her. The child may cry because of disruptions in the household or the reactions of others, rather than thinking of the death itself. Abstract concepts such as "life after death" are beyond his/her thinking ability.

In an effort to understand what has happened, young children will ask all kinds of questions that are sometimes alarming to adults. Questions like "How will Daddy go to the bathroom?" or "Can we open our presents at the cemetery?" and "When will Grandma come play with me again?" may surprise adults. No matter how appropriate the news of the death, young children will continue to ask questions and make observations that may startle adults. Regardless, they deserve a response.

Children in this age group may engage in compulsive retelling of the traumatic event in an effort to gain some mastery over it. They may unexpectedly blurt out some aspect of the trauma like, "My Aunt Karen was killed in a drunk driving crash and my mommy cries sometimes."

Although unexpected, these statements offer good opportunities to gently probe into the child's feelings and discern the purpose of such an announcement. It may be that the child only needed the sense of mastery that comes with verbalizing it or that there is some underlying feeling or question that needs to be addressed.

Because thinking is literal and concrete, death may be best explained in physical terms, as follows: "His heart stopped beating and no one can make it start. Therefore, we won't be seeing him move or talk any more. We will bury his body in the ground because he is not able to do or say anything anymore."

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For children raised in traditions that believe in an afterlife, concepts such as Heaven may be difficult for them to grasp. They will see a discrepancy between burial of the body and the description of “going home” or “going to Heaven.” While the young child probably cannot grasp the concept, you might address the distinction, as “The part that we loved, the part that smiled, laughed, and loved us, is the part that has gone to Heaven. The old, broken body is what is now in the ground.”

A child will primarily feel extreme and long-lasting sadness for the loss of significant others, such as a parent, grandparent, or sibling. The sadness may stem from feelings of abandonment. The child may conclude that their loved one departed because he/she was bad. A child’s view of morality at this age is that bad behaviors are punished and good behaviors are rewarded. It may be helpful to point out that the loved one did not choose to die, that someone’s reckless behavior caused the death.

To demonstrate an increased need to be cared for, bereaved children may regress to previously mastered behaviors, such as bed-wetting and crying upon separation. Young children will act out their fear and confusion through play and should not be discouraged from doing so. Parents and caregivers can facilitate play by sitting with the child as he/she plays with dolls, puppets, stuffed animals, toy cars, and doll houses. Sometimes monsters become concrete substitutes for death. As a parent or caregiver, ask how various dolls or stuffed animals feel during play. Look for aggression in play and explore where the anger is focused.

Because of short attention spans, young bereaved children may not be able to focus on their feelings for extended periods of time, especially those they cannot articulate. A bereaved child may ask about the death one minute, and then play happily the next.

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Parents and caregivers must realize that periods of play do not mean the child has come to terms with the loss, but are expressions of that loss or respites from their feelings.

Ages Seven to Eleven

Children ages seven to eleven are primarily oriented to family, although they begin to relate to and gain identity from their peers. Play remains a mode of self-expression, although children this age express themselves quite well verbally, especially feelings such as mad, glad, and sad. They begin to grasp more abstract concepts such as truth, time, space, and death, although magical thinking still plays a role.

Around the ages of seven or eight, children attribute life more to movements in nature, and not so much to inanimate objects like toys. A cloud is alive as it blows across the sky. Water is alive when it gurgles and runs in a stream.

Seven or eight year olds frequently become fearful of death because they realize for the first time that it is real. No matter who dies, they may feel devastated at the thought of losing a parent.

Obviously, the death of a parent is extremely traumatic at this age. Some of their questions may allude to fears of their own death. Death seems to be an attacker who takes life.

Although able to accept the finality of death, many of the factors of early childhood still apply. It's important for children of this age to express their sadness, anger, fear, and guilt.

Because they now understand that people die, they may become interested in what happens after death. As they begin to relate to some of the mysteries of life, they are able to relate to some of the mysteries of death. However, they are not ready for all of the answers.

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The child of this age is concerned not only about death as a concept, but also about the instruments of death.

They may ask questions about why the person died or seek information about who or what caused the death. They will then direct anger toward the someone or something that caused it. In the case of impaired driving crashes, it is best to help the child focus his/her anger on the person responsible so that he does not have to search for other acceptable causes.

[Children age seven to eleven begin to understand the reality of death.](#)

A child may not understand what “drunk driver” means. Show him/her that only a half a can of beer would make him sick, dizzy, and unable to stand or walk straight if he drank it. Explain how alcohol and drugs differ from milk or juice. Explain that it takes more to intoxicate an adult, and then explain how the driver’s ability to drive was diminished by the alcohol or other drugs. Focus upon one component of the crash at a time.

Although children this age can easily express glad, mad, and sad, their magical thinking may also lead to guilt feelings regarding their role in the death. Most children wish at some time or another to eliminate their parents and siblings and dream of different ways to do it. The child in this age group may believe that their “death wish” actually caused the death. Children are more susceptible to feelings of guilt than adults or adolescents, since children cannot call upon intellectual resources to persuade themselves of their innocence. It is important to reinforce over and over again that they did not cause the crash, and free expression of guilt should be encouraged.

The child of this age may also fear that death is a punishment for improper behavior. They may fear that naughty behavior has brought about the death of a loved one, and that they are likely to be punished for it. They may also believe that they or another loved one will be the next to die.

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Because the child simply cannot understand death in the intellectual level of adults, it is difficult to rid themselves of feelings of anger, fear, and guilt.

It is not unusual for a child in the age range to feel some shame regarding the death of a loved one. They may feel different from other children their age and may resist questions that relate to the death such as "What do your parents do for a living?" if a parent has died, or "How many brothers and sisters do you have?" if a sibling has died. Shame and confusion move to the forefront of their grief.

A more adult concept of life and death develops roughly between the ages of nine and eleven. At this developmental stage, the child has learned that only people, plants, and animals live and die. He/she can now think abstractly, but still does not fully appreciate meanings and values. He/she only knows that something has happened which cannot be fully understood or explained.

At this age, children are not only sensitive to their own feelings, but also to the feelings of others. As a result, they understand what the loss may mean to others. In short, they are able to empathize. The child in the upper end of this range not only needs support and comfort, but also can be a source of support and comfort to others. Opportunities to be helpful to others during the crisis can actually help the child deal with his/her own feelings.

Adolescents Ages Twelve to Sixteen

As girls tend to mature faster, they may be considered an early adolescent in the ten to twelve range, whereas boys arrive a year or two later. Adolescents are on the threshold of independence. They live in an intense world of self-discovery and are primarily concerned with life, identity, status, and peer pressure. They are tightly bonded with peers and begin to disengage from family.

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They have developed adult-like concepts of attributing life appropriately, but often face their own social and emotional immaturity.

According to child development experts, if children experience security and healthy development from birth to age three, they are apt to make fairly untroubled movement into adolescence. If, however, the early years were fraught with uncertainty, conflict, and lack of trust, adolescence may be stormy.

Young adolescents often reject parental standards. Therefore, when a parent dies, they may experience an extreme externalization of guilt. It is normal for a teen to be pulling away from home, but feel guilty for having done so in the wake of parent's or sibling's death. The adolescent's school performance will likely reflect the stress and trauma that accompanies sudden and violent death.

While academic expectations should not be relaxed, bereaved children may need extra tutoring, a less demanding schedule or some other assistance from the school. Teachers and school officials should always be notified of a death within the family, regardless of the age of the child. School personnel are in a unique position to monitor the child's response to the death both academically and socially, and to offer special services as needed. Many school counselors are also trained to identify and respond to behavior problems in school that may be grief related.

Adolescents between the ages of fourteen and sixteen have achieved a stronger identity. They do not accept peers without question and have learned to compare their values with the values of others. They are not as self-centered as before, although they may still turn thoughts toward their own death when faced with the death of another.

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Death is foreign to the emotionally healthy adolescent. It is something he/she simply does not want to think about. At best, most adolescents are insecure. Sometimes their self-destructive behaviors, such as alcohol or drug abuse, are a means of saying “I’m not afraid of death.” But the real meaning beneath might be “I’m so afraid of death that I am trying to control my fear and insecurity by making it a game.” Moving fast and keeping the music loud can be an escape from having to face fears.

When met with the loss of an important relationship, adolescents’ self-centered values may cause great fear, guilt, anxiety, and anger. They may feel that no one has felt the deep and powerful feelings they now feel. No one has ever loved as they do, or grieved as they grieve.

Adolescents may experience extreme feelings of guilt after the death of a loved one.

Adolescents have the capacity for empathy with other grievers, so their pain is doubled. They may express their rage by a general increase in aggressive behavior. They may also have intense revenge fantasies and must be helped to differentiate between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Adolescents should be told that while feelings simply exist, how one responds to those feelings could be right or wrong. Helping teens find appropriate ways to express anger and rage is of utmost importance.

Because adolescents form more intimate relationships with peers than with parents, it is advisable that networks or groups be made available for adolescents who have experienced the death of a loved one. An adolescent may respond well to another adult willing to listen and assume a surrogate parent role.

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While reluctant to participate in family therapy or support groups, an adolescent may respond well to a pastor, school counselor, or another adolescent who “understands.” Parents and caregivers of a grieving adolescent should not be discouraged if their teen reaches out to someone other than family. That is normal behavior for this stage of development. Some kind of family Adolescents may experience extreme feelings of guilt after the death of a loved one. Intervention may be necessary, however, if the adolescent’s response is destructive to the family unit.

Helping Children Cope

Respond to children’s feelings.

It is very important to respond appropriately to children’s feelings. Because a younger child is less able to express himself/herself verbally, parents and caregivers may want to offer a lot of touching, holding, and stroking to help the child feel secure. With older children, it is useful for parents and caregivers to encourage free expression of thoughts and feelings.

Children may express sadness, fear, and anger, all of which are to be expected. A child may cry, which is perfectly natural. Do not be afraid of tears and do not attempt to hurry them along. Anger may be acted out in physically appropriate ways, such as running outside or stuffing newspapers in a trash bag. When a child appears to be feeling a particular way, ask him/her how she is feeling. The best way for a child to become comfortable in sharing his/her thoughts and feelings is for a parent or caregiver to be open in sharing his/her own thoughts and feelings.

Reassure children as they bring up their fears. However irrational their fears may seem, attempt to view them in terms of a child’s development. A child can usually accept explanations when he/she knows there is adequate support from a parent or caregiver. Responses to fears that are direct, simple, and clear, accompanied by touching and holding, are the best responses.

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Understand that children frequently substitute feelings they can handle for those they cannot. They may giggle or laugh at things that are not funny. It is important to view this behavior as adaptive coping.

No matter how comfortable a child becomes with an age-appropriate explanation of death, he/she will reprocess the experience and his/her feelings about it at each developmental level, throughout his/her lifetime. As a child matures, he/she will need additional information about the deceased and the circumstances surrounding the death. He/she will need additional time, space, and opportunity to grieve and grow.

Spend time playing together.

Children often communicate their deepest feelings through actions. It is best, therefore, to respond to their feelings with actions. Parents and caregivers may support their children by taking time to sit down and play with them, not guiding the play, but allowing them to express whatever they want through the use of toys.

Responses like “Your doll got angry when his Daddy left,” and “Your doll is crying in the bed. What is she sad about?” are affirming and encourage children to work through their grief.

Understand the importance of missed events. If Dad had been teaching his son how to cast a line or how to pitch a tent, and then died, this may be the focus of much of the child’s concern. It may seem that he is more upset over fishing and camping than over the loss of his father. This is not the case, but it is the way young children are more able to express loss. The child needs sympathy and support for the feelings and not criticism or rejection because of the manner in which they are expressed.

Protect children from the emotional collapse of parents or caregivers.

While sharing as much of the family crisis as possible, protect the child from witnessing an emotional collapse on the part of one on whom he/she depends.

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Children can usually handle feelings of sorrow, loneliness, and anger, but to witness an emotional collapse will bring on unnecessary anxiety and insecurity. Ask the child how he/she feels about your sadness. This will help them with their own feelings.

Protecting children from the emotional collapse of an adult is essential, yet sending children off to spend time with other relatives or friends may be destructive. It is better not to spare children the reality of what is happening.

Children need to learn that they can experience the death of a loved one without completely falling apart.

However, they also need to feel secure in the knowledge that while they learn how to grieve, there will be a parent or caregiver there to care for them.

If a parent or caregiver is not fully equipped to care for their child, it is appropriate for them to be cared for by another responsible adult for a short period of time.

Talk about the death. There is little to be gained in answering questions that are not asked. Honest and adequate answers to children's questions about death are best, particularly those that are developmentally appropriate. Like adults, children may experience a great deal of ambivalence about the finality of death. Children may insist that their loved one is alive or that the loved one was seen breathing or opening their eyes in the casket.

Help children to understand that physical death, in itself, does not hurt. The family is crying because they hurt inside. The sadness comes from the fact that a relationship that meant much to everyone has now been lost.

Reinforce the fact to young children that their loved one did not choose to die. In life, people are given choices, and some make bad choices, such as using alcohol or other drugs and then driving.

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These choices can hurt and kill other people. It is no one's fault except the person who made the bad choice.

Write down ways you answer your child's questions about death. If kept in a journal, these responses can be used later as a reference for future discussions. Communicate with school personnel, extended family, and friends regarding your way of explaining death. If they understand your philosophy, confusing messages can be avoided.

Use caution when communicating with younger children, as they are concrete thinkers. Making statements like "To die is to go to sleep" may frighten a child, fearing that if he/she goes to sleep that he/she will die too. A statement like "Your daddy has gone away for a very long time" may leave a child feeling abandoned, and may leave him/her with the anticipation that daddy will return.

Allow children to share experiences of memorial observances. Allow children the opportunity to attend the funeral or memorial service. This confronts them with the reality that death has occurred and helps them acknowledge their loss. It is important to give a child time prior to the funeral to view the body and say goodbye in his/her own way.

Children need detailed information about what to expect at the funeral. Perhaps they will want to visit with the funeral home director who can answer questions. Although children should be encouraged to attend funerals, they should never be forced. Likewise, they should not be forced to kiss or touch the deceased, although it is perfectly all right if they wish to do so.

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Helping Children Cope With Death

If the funeral has now passed, and children were not allowed to participate, it is not too late to remedy the situation. Ask a trusted clergy person or the funeral director to conduct a short, simple memorial service just for children. Invite all the children who might like to come. Perhaps it can be held at the grave site, and the children can take photos of their loved one along in remembrance. Be prepared to answer a lot of questions.

Explore meaningful ways to remember a loved one.

Allow children to share experiences of remembrance, such as going to the cemetery. Going to the cemetery works against avoidance, denial, and repression of painful feelings. The sadness felt in that place may help the child move on through his/her grief.

Children need concrete ways of expressing themselves. It may be important for children to take flowers, letters, or other gifts to the cemetery.

Encourage the child to write a goodbye letter to the deceased. The letter can be taken to the cemetery and buried or placed with a flower arrangement.

Children may want objects, clothing, or a photograph of the loved one. Do not worry if they want to take these objects to bed with them. Making up games that begin with “Remember when” or “Do you remember” to facilitate expression of feelings may offer additional ways to remember the person who died.

Remember your loved one at holidays. Like you, children will be especially aware of the absent loved one around holidays and will want to find ways to include the deceased in the festivities.

Young children especially mark time by the passage of holidays. You may not feel much like celebrating Passover or lighting fireworks, but the maintenance of tradition is important.

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Helping Children Cope With Death

Encourage the child to write a goodbye letter to the deceased.

Take care of yourself as parent or caregiver.

Caring for a bereaved child may be painful and time-consuming.

Realize that you, too, are moving through various phases of grief, just like the children. However, you will rarely be at the same place they are at the same time.

Holiday Depression Can Be a Surprising Gift



The stores are aglow with twinkling lights and enticing merchandise. Wreathes and trees adorn the houses and buildings you pass, and holiday music is a background reminder that this is a very special, magical time of year.

But for some people, the weeks leading up to Christmas are the most painful of the year. Depression during the holidays is an all too common problem that turns the season into something to "get through" rather than a celebration to savor

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Holiday Depression Can Be a Surprising Gift

A poll on holiday stress conducted by the American Psychological Association showed that eight out of 10 Americans anticipated stress during the holiday season. This stress could trigger feelings of anxiety and sadness, or it could exacerbate an underlying depression.

There are many reasons people suffer from depression during the holidays. The excessive commercialization and pressure on buying and gift-giving can cause financial pressure and guilt. The media images of the "perfect" holiday season crammed full of activities and quality family time may be far from reality for some.

Memories of deceased loved ones or loneliness can trigger sadness and melancholy. And often the magical holiday season we anticipate fails to meet our expectations. We feel pressured and overwhelmed. Family members let us down. It's just not what we hoped for.

One of the unfortunate complications of holiday depression is an added layer of guilt and frustration that you can't enjoy the holidays like you should be able to like everyone else is doing. Not only do you feel bad, but you feel bad about feeling bad. You feel shame you aren't living up to the expectations of the season of joy.

If you are suffering from depression during this holiday season, here is a message of hope: You can turn your depression into a holiday gift. You can use this time when your depression is glaringly evident to you and those around you to create a better life for yourself in the New Year.

Here are some thoughts:

A great time for treatment

Instead of reinforcing the thought you "should" feel happy during the holidays, give yourself the gift of treatment for your depression.

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Holiday Depression Can Be a Surprising Gift

Acknowledge and accept how you are feeling, and don't try to shove it down or pretend it's not there. The best thing you can do for yourself and your loved ones is to go to your doctor or psychologist to treat your depression. Talk therapy can help you release some of the stress and sadness and manage the demands of the season with professional support. There are many other treatment options for depression, but the longer it remains untreated, the worse it will get. Make this your No. 1 holiday priority.

Re-frame your expectations

A holiday depression will force you to refocus on what's really important your health, your relationships, and the simple pleasures of life. Turn off the TV to avoid the holiday commercials, and stay away of the malls as much as possible. Simplify your life and downsize your holiday plans. You'll find you feel less stressed, more capable of handling what is absolutely necessary, and less guilty about feeling depressed.

And the true gift of re-framing is the impact it has on your life after the holidays are over. A simpler holiday season will reveal the value of a simpler life.

Intentionally connect

If loneliness and sadness over loss has triggered your seasonal depression, don't allow the depression to isolate you further. If ever there were ever a time to reach out and reconnect with old friends or to establish new ones, this is the time. Don't be shy about letting people know you're feeling blue and need to spend time with others.

Most people understand, having experienced the same feelings themselves. The gift of friendship and compassion is invaluable. And perhaps you'll encounter someone else who is feeling the same and can benefit from your willingness to share.

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Holiday Depression Can Be a Surprising Gift

Get outside and move

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) can add to your holiday depression, as the days are shorter and your exposure to sunlight is less. Busyness and cold weather make it harder to get outside and exercise. But make this a daily priority during the season. Give yourself the gift of beginning a fitness program by going outside and taking a brief walk or run every day. Studies have shown that both exercise and exposure to sunlight decrease feelings of depression during the winter months.

Commit to a budget

If you're feeling stressed and overwhelmed by the expense of the holidays, step back and assess your finances. Define exactly how much you feel comfortable spending, and communicate that to your loved ones. Setting a budget and sticking to it is a mature and responsible decision. It's a decision that will make you feel better about yourself and will kick start a lifetime gift of financially sound choices.

Small and thoughtful gifts that don't cost much (or that you make for no cost) are often the most memorable and meaningful. Free yourself from the obligation to spend.

Love yourself

Remember that in spite of your depression, you are a valuable and unique person. This depression doesn't define you, and it isn't a life sentence. Give yourself the gift of self love and tender care. Treat yourself as you would a beloved child or friend. Be patient with yourself. Offer self-care in the way of rest, warm baths, a massage, or a comforting meal. Treat yourself kindly and with the same compassion you'd offer someone else suffering with depression.

Remember that depression is a treatable illness. If you've been suffering with sadness or anxiety for more than two weeks, seek help from a professional. Give yourself the gift of mental health and wholeness this holiday season so you can begin 2014 with a light heart and bright expectations.

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The Griever's Holiday Bill of Rights



You have a right to say TIME OUT!

Any time you need it. Time to let up, blow a little steam, to cry, step away from the holidays, have a “huddle,” and start over.

You have a right to TELL IT LIKE IT IS.

When people ask, “How are you...?” you have the right to tell them how you really feel, not just what they want to hear. And to share about those I grieve during the holidays. (P.S., you also have the right to smile and say you’re fine because telling them how you really feel isn’t worth your time—some people will never understand anyway).

You have the right to SOME “BAH HUMBUG” DAYS.

You don’t have to be “Jolly Old St. Nicholas” all the time. You are not a bad person just because you don’t feel like singing Christmas carols all day.

You have the right to DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.

There is no law that says you must always do the Holidays the same way. You can do 10 cards instead of 100 or no cards at all! You can open presents at somebody else’s house. You can do without a tree. You can have a pizza instead of turkey! The list is endless...

You have the right to BE WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.

Be at home or with the relatives. Be in any city, any state you choose! (So what if you don’t have snow during the holidays!). There’s no law that says you must stay home.

The Monthly Haven

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The Griever's Holiday Bill of Rights

You have a right to SOME FUN!

When you have a day that isn't so bad and you feel like doing something just for fun, and then do it! Don't be afraid of what someone else will say if they see you laughing and having a good time. Laughter is every bit as important as tears!

You have a right to CHANGE DIRECTION IN MIDSTREAM.

Holiday grief is unpredictable. You may be all ready to go somewhere or do something and suddenly be overwhelmed. When that happens, it's okay to change your mind. There's plenty of time in life to be predictable. Exercise your right to change when you need to.

You have a right to DO THINGS AT DIFFERENT TIMES.

Go to church at a different time.
Open presents at a different time.
Serve your meal at a different time.
Give up and go to bed at a different time! Don't be a slave to the holiday clock.

You have a right to REST, PEACE, and SOLITUDE.

You don't have to be busy all the time. Take a nap whenever you need one. Take time to pray and to meditate, to recharge your spirit.

You have the right to DO IT ALL DIFFERENTLY AGAIN NEXT YEAR.

Just because you change things one year you know, try something different does not mean you have written it in stone. Next year you can always change it back or do it yet another new way.

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Words from the Administor

Beginning December 15th, 2014 we will be activating additional specialized chatrooms to our website here bringing it to a total of 20 rooms.

The rooms will be monitored all the and will be periodically moderator until we can place moderators in the designated rooms 24/7 which is going to take time and more to volunteer to be a moderator so will take time to get to that position yet so for the present time they will be periodically moderated except for the Youth room, Teen Room and General Room.

This doesn't stop anyone from going to the other rooms to chat with others they are monitored by our technical staff and admins here who watch them on a monitor live time.

The Chatrooms are as follows:

1. Safe Haven for Widowed
General Chat Room All Losses 18 an over...
2. Young Adults ages 40 and under
Have experienced the death of a partner or spouse...
3. Middle Age Adults
Middle Age Adults who have experienced the death of a partner or spouse...
4. Later Life Widows and Widowers
Late Life Adults who have experienced the death of a partner or spouse...
5. Loss of a Child
Parents who have experienced the death of a son or daughter...
6. Infant loss
Loss of a infant in death (Still Births, Miscarriages, SID'S)...
7. Loss of a Boyfriend or Girlfriend
Those who have experienced the death of Boyfriend or Girlfriend...

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Words from the Administor

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|---|---|
| <p>8. <u>Loss of Parent</u>
Adults who have experienced the death of a mother or father...</p> | <p>15. <u>Grief and War</u>
Cope with Loss Resulting from War or Terrorism...</p> |
| <p>9. <u>Loss of a Fiancée or Fiancé</u>
Those who have experienced the death of Fiancée or Fiancé...</p> | <p>16. <u>LGBT Grief</u>
LGBT who have lost a partner to death. LGBT are also welcome in our other chat rooms...</p> |
| <p>10. <u>Parent or Guardians with Children Parent or Guardian</u>
Who are Raising Children after the death of a parent or parents...</p> | <p>17. <u>Care giving and Grieving</u>
Chat room for caregivers coping with grief & loss...</p> |
| <p>11. <u>Loss of Grandparents</u>
Those who have experienced the death of Grand Parents...</p> | <p>18. <u>Christian grief chat room</u>
Christian or non Christian who have experienced the death of a loved one. All religions...</p> |
| <p>12. <u>General Grief</u>
Adults who have experienced the death of a close friend or relative...</p> | <p>When you come to the main website page on December 15th just click on Chat Rooms button and login with your user name and password. You will get a list of the rooms to join select the room you want to goto is all you have to do.</p> |
| <p>13. <u>Survivors of Suicide</u>
Those who lost a loved one to suicide...</p> | |
| <p>14. <u>Adults Grieving the Death of a Sibling</u>
Those who have experienced the death of a brother or sister...</p> | <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #c85130; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Chat Rooms</div> |

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Words from the Administor

About Our Donation Policy

Some of you have approached and have asked us concerning about donations there seems that there has been a drive asking for donations on the social media from other grief \ widowed support sites on social media.

Saf havenforwidowed.org. doesn't ask, solicit or promote for donations we are strictly a free site to all those that have suffered a loss of any type whether it be a Spouse, Parent, Child, Infant, Friend, Sibling, Partner, etc.

Bringing together others that are traveling and have traveled this journey together so no one has to be alone where everyone understand with no judgment or discrimination in a safe, secured, confidential environment.

Offering many resources for all types of losses.

- Chatrooms
- Forum
- Memorial Tribute Webpage's Custom Designed for Member's (Free)
- Articles
- Monthly Newsletter
- Virtual Candles
- Facebook Community Page
- And much more

All this is totally free resources are available to all that new and old that you don't have to pay for or expect you to spend hundreds or dollars to attend to functions to attend to events thousands of miles from home or even hundreds of miles from home.

The Monthly Haven

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Words from the Administor

As we continue to grow going on our 6th year now adding more rooms which will be December 15th they will be active to the need total of 16 specialized moderated rooms being placed.

Again totally free so please realize if it's free doesn't mean its bad or that. Our owner/founder William H. Fyler when he did this said at that time there will be no asking donations and be no soliciting.

That these members are broke, hurting and in pain already and have no money and Safehavenforwidowed is to be a Safe secured website for everyone 24/7 365 days a year and to remain free.

So we don't solicit actively for your money at a time when your judgment may not be the clearest.

An around the holidays really when a lot of us are not are not thinking clearly right now either.

Good news with that is yes we will be here in 10 yrs, 20 yrs, 30 yrs, 50 yrs yet too.

Tracy Crain

Assistant Director
Safehavenforwidowed.org

The Monthly Haven

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Words from the Administor



Back on August 29, 2014 we were honored to introduce the “**The Widow’s Voice**”. To all widowed and non-widowed in the community and worldwide no matter how long your loss was or whom you lost.

The Widows’ Voice has helped and is helping many widowed and non-widowed who are on this journey called grief no matter how long or how many years it been or whom you have lost.

Weekly by interactive talk show broadcast via the internet. With your main host: **Elder Teresa McWilliams** along with **Elder Cleora Fortson**, and **Elease Patterson**. Weekly on THURSDAY at 2:30pm and 10:00pm eastern standard time on [wmbm.com](http://www.wmbm.com)

With different topics each week of great interest plus great information, we hope you have been joining us also in tuning in on Thursday to listen.

If you have a missed a broadcast or would like to hear it again the entire broadcast are available on their website Thewidowsvoice.org under rebroadcast for your listening and also available in their forum for listening and downloading on their website.

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Words from the Administor

You don't have to be widowed either to listen or join in and you can also listen to these broadcast live from your mobile device in the comforts of your home, car, or office.

Also visit them on their facebook page too at [TheWidowsVoice](#) and while there give them a like lots of great information there too can goto there facebook page from the website and also share it with others.

For upcoming scheduled events and topics you find them at:

- Safehavenforwidowed on Facebook community page
- Safehavenforwidowed website events calendar.
- Thewidowsvoice website under events
- Safehavenforwid on twitter
- Safehavenforwidowed on Google plus
- Thewidowsvoice on facebook

So look each week for new posting on topics for the following which will be posted every Thursday evening weekly on the above locations and also posting from The Widows Voice too.

Safehavenforwidowed.org is very happy and honored to have them a part of our team here at Safehavenforwidowed as we continue to move forward in reaching out to the community also and bringing together all those young and old who are on this journey together with Understanding, Love, Non-judgment, Non-discrimination and with more resources also an support.

Tracy Crain
Assistant Director
[Safehavenforwidowed.org](#)

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Words from the Administor



December is upon us where did this year go or the months go really seems like we were just talking about vacations, working in flowerbeds with the dirt and worms. I know our friends on the West Coast and down South in places are taking this all in and loving this and laughing at us here. We still love them cold, wet, freezing wondering what else mother nature has in store for us tomorrow will it be in the high 60's or be in the 70's or be in 30's.

Just like that grief rollercoaster we all ride on and hate never know what to expect on that next curve or bend or the grief monster that hides behind that wall and jumps out at us when least expect it.

Do we get use to this answer is no we just go along and in time it gets easier to cope with it. So when we are having them those days when that rollercoaster is going downhill or going at top speed or that grief monster popped out at us unexpected from behind that wall and the burst of tears come and our anxiety reaches top peak please don't feel that you are alone and don't give up reach out we are here some day's may not seem like some of us may be out on that ride for awhile too but we understand and we are together on this journey all of us.

This is the time of year now that most of us will be getting cabin fever, the loneliness is deeper, and nights are longer, minds going thousand of mile per hour some-times on the have been and what is now our life and more the list is so great can keep on an on.

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Words from the Administor

Don't give up we do get through this together there is no way around it unfortunately beside going through it our moderators, members, and staff all do get it and understand our chatroom is open 24/7 and adding more rooms the 15th to site because of the need for them to reach out to all those that are new and old. Have added more resources to the site and adding more and more bi-weekly we are to cover many areas relating to the losses of loved ones.

Hours in the evening have been extended till am hours with the moderators in the room so those who can't sleep have someone to talk too or just sit with so not alone.

2015 we are planning some new events that will be announced in the next 2 or 3 months coming up.

Don't be afraid either to tell others about us here in groups on social media or where ever all welcome here.

I would also like to thank everyone for the support they have given me this year as your Assistant Director here without that support in the input from some of you's. This transition would have been hard if not impossible at times but with your support and all the moderators an staff it made it easier .

Safehavenforwidowed.org is very organized and yes very secured and confidential our team of Information Technology Specialist I can't thank them enough for what they do and the headaches they get hit with daily at times and the same goes for our Webmaster and The Haven Editors and all the others I have not forgotten you's either just so many behind the site here that we don't see on the site or in the rooms that make all this possible. Have to say when this was designed a lot of planning and research went into it for the present and for the future that has been put in place.

The Monthly Haven

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Words from the Administor

Which also made the transition easier too. I am looking forward to continue in working with you all in the years come not only as a widow but as your Assistant Director here.

If you have suggestions or a complaint or dislikes goto the main page here click on forms and you will see suggestions and feedback fill that out and submit it. These are private and not seen by members.

This is how we know what is needed and how to make this a better place and safer nothing is crazy.

Tracy Crain
Assistant Director

