

## A HOLIDAY MESSAGE

If this is your first holiday season without your loved one, you are probably dreading it, or at least not looking forward to it with your usual anticipation. Maybe you are already asking yourself, “How will I get through Thanksgiving dinner with that empty chair looking at me?” or “How will I feel the joy of Christmas without him to share it with me?” Perhaps you just don’t want to think about it, but the thoughts keep popping into your head anyway. Hopefully the [following] ideas . . . will help you get through the . . .season ahead.

First, know that the anticipation of the day is always worse than the day itself. Secondly, know and accept that it will be painful. Allow yourself to lean into the hurt. It is because you loved that you are hurting deeply now. Let the pain happen and it will lessen more quickly. You probably have had many joyful holidays with your loved one, so you can expect that the first holiday without him or her will be difficult.

In order to make this time easier on you, friends and family might mistakenly try to keep you constantly occupied on Thanksgiving or Christmas Day. They hope that keeping you busy will prevent you from thinking of your loved one. This probably won’t work. In addition to thinking about your loved one and the holidays you shared in the past, you will feel the added stress of having to “put on a face” for those around you.

Here’s a suggestion for compromise that falls between staying in bed and crying all day and keeping so busy that you can’t think. Make some plans that will openly address the fact that this is the first holiday without your loved one, and that you miss him/her terribly. Tell those you will be spending the day with, that this will be a difficult time for you, and that they can help you best by allowing you to express your feelings. Let them know you’ll need to talk about past Thanksgivings or Christmases with your loved one, and to talk about how you miss him or her this year. If you explain this to others in advance, it can free you to discuss your thoughts and feelings. Meanwhile, others are spared the discomfort of not knowing what to expect from you – or of not knowing what to say to you on this day.

A word of warning? Friends and relatives may see you as “morbid” or “sick” if you do some of the things suggested here. Don’t let this deter you if this is what YOU want to do. You must get yourself through difficult days or times in ways that are best for YOU.

May the spirit of the holidays bring you some measure of peace.