

*Surviving
the
Holidays*

Workshop/Memorial



of Citrus
and the Nature Coast

352.249.1470

www.friendsofcitrus.org

“Surviving the Holidays”

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8471 W. Periwinkle Lane
Homosassa Springs FL 34446
352-249-1470
www.friendsofcitrus.org



Because We Care

*Because we really care about you,
we are not going to pretend
and wish you a Happy Holiday
as if nothing has happened.*

*Instead, we are going
to reach out to you
and tell you we realize
this must be a very difficult time for you.*

*It probably doesn't seem fair
that everyone else is smiling
and laughing and enjoying the Holidays as usual,
while your heart is aching.*

*There may be times a favorite carol that used to
bring a smile to your face now brings tears to your eyes.*

*You may feel confused, cheated, and even angry...
and we would not blame you.*

*But rather than force yourself to fake the Holiday Spirit,
please be honest with your emotions.*

Cry, be angry, do whatever it takes to get through this.

*Remember too that in time you will be ready
to celebrate again.*

*And until then, know that there are many people
whose hearts are with you especially now...
people who care about you very much and always will.*

Your friends at Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast



Some Realizations To Help You Through the Holidays



- 1. You will be sad.**
Acknowledge the loss.
Mourn the person.
Give yourself permission to be sad and to shed tears.
Articulate your feelings.
Know that others will understand.

- 2. The holidays will not be easy.**
Losses are real.
Grief is painful and takes energy.
Your life has changed and so will your holiday observance.

- 3. Your support system is there to help – Identify your support system.**
Illustration: Draw a support tree.
Let the leaves be the persons you know you can count or things that nourish your spirit – music, art, poetry, reading, meditation.

- 4. Dreading the holidays is actually worse than experiencing them.**
Although it will be hard and sad, in all likelihood, the experience will not be as bad as you fear.

- 5. You can make it!!!**
You will be given the Courage,
Faith,
Hope,
Inner strength to make it!

The Griever's Holiday Bill of Rights



1. You have a right to say **TIME OUT!** any time you need to.
Time out to let up, blow a little steam, step away from the holidays, have a “huddle” and start over.
2. 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.* (*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.)
3. 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.
4. You have the right **TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY.** There is no law that says you must always do Christmas 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 pizza instead of turkey! The list is endless...
5. You have the right to **BE WHERE YOU WANT TO BE.** Be at home or with relatives. Be in any city, any state you choose! **NOBODY SAID YOU HAVE TO HAVE SNOW TO HAVE CHRISTMAS.** There’s no law that says you must stay home!
6. 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, 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!
7. You have a right to **CHANGE DIRECTION IN MID-STREAM.** 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.
8. 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.
9. You have a right to **REST, PEACE AND SOLITUDE.** You don’t need to be busy all the time. Take a nap whenever you need one. Take time to pray and meditate, to recharge your spirit. It may do you much more good than eating another huge meal!
10. 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.

Personal Holiday Plan



I predict that the most difficult parts of the holiday season for me will be:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

The most difficult people to be with might be:

My support people, those who can hear my grief are:

Words that are helpful for me to hear:

The most difficult words, words I do not consider supportive, might be:

If someone says words that are not supportive, I will respond by:

Traditions that I will keep THIS year:

Traditions that I won't do THIS year:

People I would like to spend my holiday with:

People I don't want to be with on the holiday:

Things that might help me when I am feeling intense pain are:

My worries, concerns, thoughts, and feelings about getting through this time are:



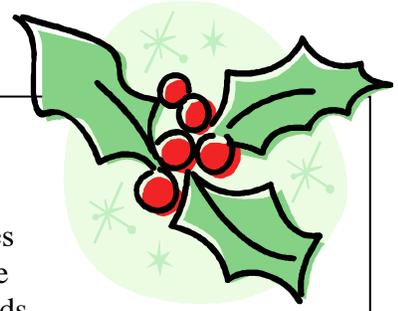
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Things That Help



- Be tolerant of your physical and psychological limits
 - Sleep and nap
 - Remember to eat
- Eliminate unnecessary stress
 - Simplify holiday preparations
 - Entertain less
 - Create white space on your calendar
- Be with supportive, comforting people
 - Avoid angry or emotionally draining people
- Talk about your loss and the person who died
 - Add a symbol of your loss to your tree or decorations
- Do what is right for you
 - Honor yourself and your unique needs
 - Take a time out
- Plan ahead for family gatherings
 - At times be the “party pooper”
 - Have a plan “B”
- Do things differently/be creative with this
- Give yourself a gift
- Express your faith/use it as a source of strength

Coping With The Holidays Checklist



Check what you would traditionally do with a (T) and then check with a (W) what you want to do this year. Share this with your family or have them do one of their own and compare notes.

Christmas Cards

- Mail as usual
- Shorten your list
- Include a "Christmas Letter"
- Elect to skip this year

Decorations

- Decorate as usual
- Modify your decorations
- Ask for help
- Let others do it
- Make changes, such as: artificial tree instead of a real one
- Have a special decoration for your loved one
- Eliminate the tree or other decorations

Shopping

- Shop as usual
- Give cash
- Shop through catalogs
- Ask for help
- Shop early
- Make your gifts
- Give baked goods
- Shop with a friend
- Ask for help wrapping gifts
- Do not exchange gifts now, but perhaps later
- Make a list of gifts you want before you go out

Christmas Music

- Enjoy as usual
- Avoid turning the radio on
- Shop early before stores have Christmas music on
- Listen to it, have a good cry and allow yourself to feel sad

Traditions

- Keep the old traditions
- Attend holiday parties
- Don't attend holiday parties
- Go to an entirely new place
- Bake the usual holiday foods
- Buy the usual holiday foods
- Bake but modify what you would usually do
- Go to a religious service
- Do not attend a religious service
- Attend a religious service but at a different time
- Attend a totally different church
- Spend quiet time alone
- Visit the cemetery
- Open gifts on Christmas Eve
- Open gifts on Christmas Day

Christmas Dinner

- Prepare as usual
- Go out for dinner
- Invite friends over
- Eat alone
- Change time of dinner
- Change routine of dinner, such as, this year do a buffet
- Change location of dinner, eat in a different room
- Ask for help

Post Christmas and New Year's Day

- Spend as usual
- Remove the Christmas decorations early
- Go out of town
- Avoid New Year's parties
- Attend a New Year's party
- Have a New Year's party
- Spend time with only a few friends
- Write in your journal your hopes for the New Year
- Go to a movie
- Go to bed early

Creating Your Own Memorials



There are endless possibilities to create memorials to your loved one limited only by imagination, time, and resources. A simple idea or action can be just as powerful (or sometimes more so) than a complicated routine. Some rituals have a history in our culture, others are unique to a family. Select what is the most meaningful for you at this moment. Memorials do not have to last forever or become a tradition every year – unless that is a choice you make for next year! We have compiled a list of ideas you may wish to borrow, or from which you may create your own outcome.

- 1. Advent Calendar.** The Advent Calendar originated in Germany and Scandinavia, but it has now become very popular in America as well. Some times the Advent calendar is the picture of a house with windows that can be opened to reveal tiny pictures. Other times it is a picture of a typical Christmas scene with small flaps that open to tiny windows. There is one window for each day of Advent, the season before Christmas. Each day a window is opened. You may create your own Advent calendar by adhering pictures from your family behind each window. Each day before Christmas you will be able to reflect on a new memory.
- 2. Altars.** In antiquity the altar was a place of sacrifice. It evolved into a shrine, where symbols of meaningful relationships with forces beyond human beings (the various gods) were kept. Today it is a sacred place of prayer, sacrament and consecration. Because it has represented power, lack of control in life and earth, it has a special place in memorializing. Many families place flowers on the altar of their church in memory of a loved one who has died. On birthdays, anniversaries and the holidays, flowers signify love.
- 3. Baking.** The ringing of bells at Christmas time is a holdover from pagan midwinter celebrations. When the earth was cold and the sun was dying, evil spirits were considered to be roaming around and very powerful. One of the ways to drive them off was by making a great deal of noise. As making a great deal of noise was also rather fun, the noise making ceremonies were entered into with much good will. Bells were a very useful part of this, since you could play a bell and shout or sing at the same time. Today, if you decorate with bells, it can signify that life has two sides to it. Some events are painful and others are joyous. They can even be both at the same time!
- 4. Birds' Holiday Tree.** This is a custom throughout the Scandinavian countries at Christmas time and is in keeping with the general tendency to try to share the festivities with all animal and plant life so that the coming year will be a prosperous one. The sounds and sights of the birds gathering in your yard around a colorful bird feeder may be healing as you identify with life in a simpler form.
- 5. Candles.** The soft glow of a memorial candle, the blaze from a Menorah or the practical light from a lantern all have a special place during celebration. Candles are placed on a birthday cake in honor of life. Candles are lit at the funeral as we grieve a death. The symbol of a light in darkness is universal in representing hope. Light a memorial candle in honor of your loved one at a certain time each day. Spend a few moments in meditation, reflection or prayer. Then go about the business of your day, or the festivities of your celebration. Before you retire for the night, blow out the candle and wish yourself a good night's rest.
- 6. Carols.** Singing is an ancient means of communicating. Christmas carols were developed as a sign of good will among neighbors. You may wish to have carolers come to your door, or do a bit of caroling yourself.

7. China. There are many heirlooms in families. China comes to mind as something which can be passed down from grandmother to granddaughter on the occasion of a wedding, birthday or Christmas. There are many valuables in a family, treasures which may be kept in memory, even of the youngest member who has died. An heirloom need not be expensive, just rich in meaning for you to give it as a gift.

8. Discuss the values your family has learned from a loved one who has died. A time of sharing is a welcome relief from the isolation most people try to experience during the holidays. Reflect a moment of the life that has past, and its meaning for your future.

9. Donations. Time, money, talent and other resources are your gifts. When you give those gifts to others who have less than you, you both are richer. Donating to charities, college funds and volunteering your time to a worthy organization are wonderful ways to memorialize your loved one.

10. Elves. In Denmark, a bowl of rice pudding is left on Christmas Eve for Julnisse, an ornery little elf who lives in the lofts of old farmhouses and concerns himself with playing practical jokes on one and all. He is placated with the rice pudding and will take care of the household all year. A variation of this theme is the serving of rice pudding at Christmas dinner. The pudding is sprinkled with cinnamon, with a magic almond hidden in it. The person who has the almond receives a surprise. We are reminded with this tradition that life is full of surprises, and that we need to remember to laugh.

11. Flowers. An eternal symbol of the life cycle, the beauty that is born from a seed, blooms and dies to return to the earth. Flowers are used for decoration, as centerpieces at the table or as a single memorial placed next to the picture of the loved one who has died. Your favorite flower, the flower that was in your wedding or given to you at the birth of your child, physically lasts only a short time, but in memory will have a special meaning always.

12. Framing. Drawing attention to something that is important is done in many ways. Putting a “frame” around the event provides a memory for a long time. Find a picture of your loved one, or a special event that took place which involved your loved one. Have this picture placed in an elegant frame and give the picture as a gift.

13. Fruit. The original Christmas trees were decorated with fruit, flowers and berries. Later candles were added. The color and fragrance of fruit, as well as the symbol of nurturance and satisfaction that fruit represents can be a welcome addition to your home and to your life during times of stress. You may wish to use fruit on your tree, as a centerpiece, in your punchbowl or over your door as a sign of welcome.

14. Holly. The bright colors of the holly made it a natural symbol of rebirth and life in the winter whiteness of Northern Europe. In late December, the Teutonic peoples traditionally place holly and other evergreens around the interior dwellings to ward off winter, bad weather and unwanted spirits. Traditionally in England, the prickly holly is called “he” and the nonprickly “she”. Which type of holly is first brought into the house at Christmas determines who will rule the household for the coming year. The gift of holly today is a symbol of hope for the year ahead.

15. Kissing bough. Until the introduction of the Christmas tree in the middle of the nineteenth century, the kissing bough was the primary piece of decoration greenery in the English Christmas. It was in the shape of a double hoop with streamers going up to a central point, like a maypole with two circles of garland. It was made up of evergreen boughs, holly and ivy and hung with apples and pears or ribbons and ornaments, with lighted candles and a bunch of mistletoe hanging from the center. This bough was rich in symbols, as we already mentioned! You may wish to change your décor this year and try something like the kissing bough. The added benefits of being held, hugged and kissed are good for everyone!

16. Living Christmas tree. Cut evergreens are lovely Christmas trees, which can be burned at the end of the season in your fire place for warmth. A living Christmas tree can also be used which you can plant in a significant place at the end of the season and watch it grow year after year. You may wish to invite friends and family to a planting of your tree in honor and memory of your loved one who died.

17. Luminaries. These are a Mexican tradition which are a sign of welcome and invitation. They are simple to make, consisting of paper bags, sand and candles. The luminaries may line your sidewalk or driveway or be extended into the whole neighborhood.

18. Ornaments. The first Christmas trees had real fruit and flowers as their only ornaments. Cookies, nuts and others kinds of food were later added. Lighted candles were placed on the trees. All of this was understandably heavy, and it took a sturdy tree to stand up without drooping to the ground. Perhaps as a remedy for this problem, German glass blowers began producing featherweight glass balls to replace the heavy ornamentation. This was the beginning of a highly specialized industry which today produces literally millions of different decorations. You may wish to begin the tradition of selecting a new ornament each year in memory of your loved one. The ornament may represent your relationship, a favorite hobby that was shared or a special talent.

19. Photograph album. Spending time with your favorite photos of events past is a lovely way to enhance a holiday. Gathering your memories and sharing them with trusted others is not only healing, but may also serve as a new tradition to which everyone can add a new picture or memory each year.

20. Poetry. You may have a talent you knew or did not know you had. Memorializing in poems is a gift you can share. Your loved one may also have written poetry, drawn pictures or composed songs. You may wish to have these works professionally printed and bound and given as gifts on special occasions.

21. Quilting. Gathering memorabilia onto pieces of cloth in which family and friends have contributed is becoming a popular means of memorializing. The famous AIDS quilt which now spans several miles is an unforgettable example.

22. Scholarship. The gift of educating a needy student in memory of a loved one is a wonderful way of perpetuating the deeper values in our society. You may establish a fund to which others contribute and which grows on a yearly basis, or make it a one time award. You may be as specific or general as you wish in establishing the guidelines for receiving this honor.

23. Shadow box. This project is one the children especially may cherish. Ask each contributor to find a special piece of jewelry, a trinket, or some other small object which reminds them of an event, talent or funny moment about the loved one. A shadow box is a construction which can be purchased in most home stores or lumber yards. It has small compartments on which objects may be placed and displayed. The shadow box can be set up in a place of prominence in your home, and become a center of discussion when guests arrive.

24. Stockings. Hanging the stocking on the mantle at Christmas is a particularly poignant experience. It is important to decide whether or not to hang the stocking the loved one used, or a stocking which represents that member of family who has died. You might consider using the stocking in a different way. You may wish to write notes about your loved one and put them in the stocking. You may have a special message or some unfinished business that is important for you to express. Invite others to do the same. Then you have the option to share these, keep them and put them in a memory book or surrender them to the ashes in the fireplace as a ritual of healing.

25. Story. Take time to tell your favorite story about your loved one. Stories build legends which pass down values from generation to generation. You may gather these stories and put them in written form, later to be reproduced and distributed for all to enjoy.

26. Table setting. The meal is a time of gathering, nurturing and sharing. The place of gathering can be as simple as buying paper plates and as elaborate as a full set of china. The centerpiece may be as sentimental as the top ornament from a wedding cake to flowers and candles of your choice. The place at the table where your loved one used to sit is a special consideration. You may wish to set that place, leaving a single flower or an empty glass to symbolize the presence in spirit of the person who died.

27. A toast and a prayer. As you look to the future, take care of your needs at this moment. It may be difficult for you and the rest of the family to drink a toast or include your loved one by name in prayer. This is a decision to be made ahead of time. Your toast may be written and elaborate or as simple as observing a moment of silence in memory and honor of the past.



8471 W. Periwinkle Lane
Homosassa Springs FL 34446
352-249-1470
www.friendsofcitrus.org

A Holiday Memorial



As we light these four candles in honor of you, we light one for our grief, one for our courage, one for our memories and one for our love.

The first candle represents our grief. The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

The second candle represents our courage – to confront our sorrow – to comfort each other – to change our lives.

The third candle, we light in your memory – the times we laughed, the times we cried – the times we were angry with each other – the silly things you did, the caring and joy you gave us.

This final candle is the light of love. As we enter this holiday season, day by day we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us. We love you.

Light A Candle

And I will light a candle for you,
To shatter all the darkness and bless the times we knew.
Like a beacon in the night,
The flame will burn bright and guide us on our way.
Oh, today I light a candle for you.

The seasons come and go,
And I'm weary from the change,
I keep on moving on, you know it's not the same.
And when I'm walking all alone,
Do you hear me call your name,
Do you hear me sing the songs we used to sing?

And I will light a candle for you,
To shatter all the darkness and bless the times we knew.
Like a beacon in the night,
The flame will burn bright and guide us on our way.
Oh, today I light a candle for you.

You filled my life with wonder,
Touched me with surprise,
I always saw that something special deep within your eyes.
And through the good times and the bad,
We carried on with pride,
I hold onto the love and life we knew.

And I will light a candle for you,
To shatter all the darkness and bless the times we knew.
Like a beacon in the night,
The flame will burn bright and guide us on our way.
Oh, today I light a candle for you.





of Citrus
and the Nature Coast
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8471 W. Periwinkle Lane
Homosassa Springs FL 34446
352.249.1470
fax: 352.527.0386

Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast is a charitable organization providing community grief support for anyone who has experienced a loss; telephone support; grief support resources for all ages; educational materials for parents and teachers; wellness support programs; and children's grief support camps. Social support for widows and widowers is provided through the **L.I.F.T. Program**, sponsored by Dignity Memorial in Citrus County.

Herry's Kids Children's Services programs include **Camp Good Hope** and **Teen Encounter** grief support camps, which provide an honest, safe environment where kids can learn to talk openly about their loss and improve their ability to cope.

VISION:
To be a grief resource for people of all ages and stages of life.

MISSION:
To provide help, hope and healing to people in grief

Grief

is the normal and natural response to losing someone or something.



Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Programs and services are offered at no cost. All of the programs and services offered are totally dependent on donations, fundraising and Thrift & Gift Shoppe operations.



Homosassa Springs
8471 W. Periwinkle Lane
(red building on left)
Homosassa Springs FL 34446
352.621.1550

Lecanto
1581 W. Gulf to Lake Hwy.
(Hwy. 44)
Lecanto FL 34461
352.341.2220

Grief Hurts . . . Your Donation Helps

- Make a cash donation
- Become a member or partner
- Join our volunteer team
- Donate merchandise and shop at Thrift Shoppes
- Hold a fundraising event
- Purchase a memorial
- Make a gift through: a will, endowment, annuity, real estate, security, life insurance, retirement account, property or bank account

For information about services or to donate, call **352.249.1470** or visit www.friendsofcitrus.org or **Friends of Citrus** on Facebook.

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"Herry the Heron" is the logo for Friends of Citrus and the Nature Coast. The heron is symbolic of calm, grace, solitude, patience, versatility, tranquility, intelligence, determination, independence and resourcefulness.
Herry carries a message that says *we cannot always do everything by ourselves. There are times in everybody's life in which we gotta "get a little help from our friends."*