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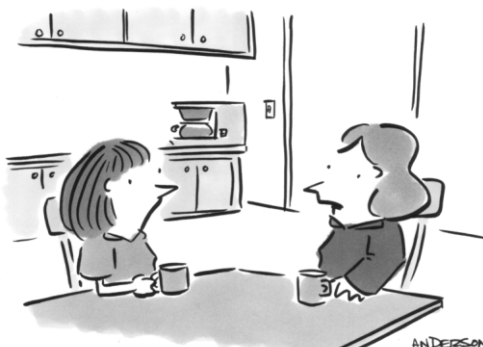
Chapters

turning the pages through grief



Grief is a harrowing journey at any time of year, but as we approach the holiday season, where we find high expectations of joy and cheer, it can be especially daunting. Grief is no gift, and certainly no joke. You may find yourself wondering why the world is still celebrating as though nothing has happened, when your world is upside-down. At a time when everyone seems to be singing and exchanging presents, you may feel like hiding under a blanket. Don't be surprised if your usual merry attitude takes a vacation from the holiday festivities this year. Keep in mind that Christmas, Hanukkah, the New Year, and everything that comes along with it will return next year.

I don't say this flippantly, but if possible, find a way to enjoy the season, even if it isn't merry. If you're thinking that there is absolutely no chance of that happening (and it's okay if you are),



"I used to want it all, now I just want it all quiet."

find comfort any way you need to. If the things in which you usually take comfort cannot be found, do the opposite. Rather than a glorious family breakfast or holiday party, it may mean a cup of tea by the fire with your journal, or a walk in solitude. Whatever choice you make, will not be wrong. If you are usually quite comfortable on your own, and this year the thought of more seclusion is too much to bear, then perhaps a holiday party is exactly what you need.

Often we take on a persona that is quite different when grieving than who we normally are. It's important not to let the expectations of others dictate your behavior with preconceived ideas about who you

continued...

DECEMBER
2021



*"We need to be able to taste grace,
and know once again that we desire it."*

— Barbara Kingsolver

...continued from front

are, or who you’ve been. After all, you may never have been here before. All bets are off while grieving, so someone who is demure may become quite stern and someone who is generally chatty, may be much more quiet, even downright withdrawn. Only you know which expression of yourself is most genuine right now. If even you find yourself surprised by a sudden change, such as cloudy thinking when you’re usually used or the inability to calculate numbers in your head when you know you’re sharp as a tack, don’t give it a second thought. We all have an allotted capacity of energy to think, to focus, and basically to run on. Due to grief, yours may be spread thin right now. Take a breath, give yourself a break and don’t doubt for a moment that your mathematical or poetry writing skills will be back in full swing as soon as you have energy to spare once again.

Basically, death is eventually a part of the journey for all of us. Coming to grips with the finality of it is difficult enough without all the expectations of what we’re supposed to be doing or feeling at a certain time of the year. While others mean well as they drown you in platitudes about opening windows and closing doors and a host of other “bright side” clichés, use what’s left of your energy to try to find your center. When you find something that does bring you comfort, hang on through the holiday season. You’ll know when it’s time to let go, and, depending on what it is you’ve found, that may be never. Above all else, remember as the rest of the world celebrates, to be kind to yourself through what is going to be undoubtedly a difficult season of grieving.

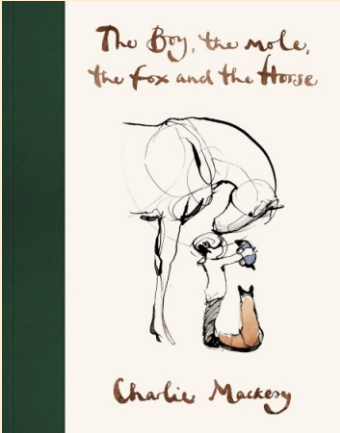
Only you know which expression of yourself is most genuine right now.

bookmarks

Charlie Mackesy’s *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, offers inspiration and hope in uncertain times in this beautiful book, following the tale of a curious boy, a greedy mole, a wary fox and a wise horse who find themselves together in sometimes difficult terrain, sharing their greatest fears and biggest discoveries about vulnerability, kindness, hope, friendship and love. The shared adventures and important conversations between the four friends are full of life lessons that have connected with readers of all ages.

Recently featured on CBS Sunday Morning show, the artist and author offers a gentle approach with tremendous impact.

Available in book form, downloadable, or listen online.



TIME OUT



December Snow • Eric Ravilious (1903 - 1942)
Wood Engraving • Wood Engraving

• Birthstone: Turquoise • Flower: Narcissus

Did You Know?

1. An almanac prediction states that if snow falls on Christmas Day, Easter will be warm, green and sunny.
2. The name December comes from the Latin word decem for “ten,” as it was the 10th month in the Roman Calendar.
3. The term Yuletide comes from a Norse tradition of cutting and burning a tree to bring in the Winter Solstice. This was to last through 12 days – later known as the 12 days of Christmas.
4. December 12th is Poinsettia Day.
5. Saint Nickolas, who would eventually be called Santa Claus, was originally the patron saint of children, thieves and pawnbrokers!
6. The first artificial Christmas tree was made in Germany, fashioned out of goose feathers that are dyed green!
7. “Jingle bells” was composed in 1857, and not for Christmas – it was meant to be a Thanksgiving song!
8. An ancient legend states that forest animals can speak in human language on Christmas Eve!

recipe card



SPICE OF LIFE

Herbs and spices don't just add flavor to our meals, they also have powerful mood and health benefits.

GINGER: Ginger acts as both a mood-booster and an energy-booster. You can try adding a thumb-sized piece of ginger to hot water with a slice of lemon, or whizzing into your morning smoothie, to feel its uplifting benefits.

TURMERIC: The compounds in turmeric have not only been shown to have a powerful effect on mood, but it seems it can help to boost memory, too.

GARLIC: Garlic is full of vitamin B6 which is associated with busting insomnia, fighting fatigue and lifting mood.

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