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Mandy Luikens-Spilde & Tiffany Pape Hofer
Owners/Funeral Directors
tiffany@luceluzereck.com

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Chapters

turning the pages through grief

In the Winter of your Grief

by Paulette LeBlanc

Grieving can be particularly grueling in the midst of winter. No matter where you are located, this time of year most likely brings about two things; celebrating, and less-than-cheery weather. Neither of these things are going to make someone want to leap from their bed each morning, ready to embrace the day ahead while they are grieving the loss of someone they love.

While everyone is celebrating the holidays and planning all the things they'll resolve to do in the upcoming year, you may feel the need to take a break and curl inward. Don't be surprised if everyone surrounding you, 'won't take no for an answer,' when you turn down holiday parties, get-togethers, and celebrations. It's okay to take a pass on some of these things, and be choosy, however, do choose something, even if only one thing. If your inclination is to grieve privately, by all means, don't let others pressure you into something you're not feeling

up to, but for your own sake, it is okay to distract yourself momentarily with all the glitz and glamour of the upcoming holidays. Sometimes striking up a conversation at a get-together, with someone you've never met can be downright therapeutic. After all, their lack of knowledge regarding your current situation may be just what you need now. If you feel like unleashing on someone you do or do not know well, their perspective could help immensely. Half the things I treasure

having learned are things people said to me off-the-cuff. Half the dread of going to a gathering you don't feel like going to, is indeed the dread itself.

If the weather where you are is less than what you'd call desirable, that can add to your grief. If you cannot find a bit of natural sunlight, there are light therapies available. Light therapy is thought to affect brain chemicals linked to mood and sleep. Using a light therapy box may also help with other types of depression, sleep disorders and other conditions. Light therapy is also known as bright light therapy or phototherapy (Mayoclinic.org).

If natural sunlight is available where you're located and you've simply been keeping yourself indoors, it may be time to head outside. Take a short walk, whether with someone or by yourself. This could seriously lift your mood, and even help you sleep better. Self-care is something people often



"OK, who set the thermostat to 33?!"

DECEMBER
2021

continued...

Winter passes and one remembers one's perseverance.

~Yoko Ono

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neglect to prioritize, especially if you are accustomed to caring for others. It is helpful to remember that self-care is not saying, ‘me first,’ but rather ‘me too.’

With everything you are likely dealing with, it’s important to remember to throw yourself into the mix of things that need tending. This could be something as big as taking the time for a bubble bath to relax, or meditating

as you practice yoga to focus on your breathing, or as small as enjoying a chocolate mint, or your favorite television show.

Each day you get through right now is a small triumph. After all, you no longer have the person you’re grieving, so in a way every day is new. No one can go through the grieving process for you, no matter how well-meaning they are. When you awaken

every morning, congratulate yourself for getting that much further in the process. Soon this season will be put behind you, like every other season of your life and you will have managed your grief. Sadly, the time it takes is different for each of us, and no one can tell you exactly when your new normal will begin.

Remember to be kind to yourself in this season.

thinkpiece



Addressing Avoidance Behavior: where do I start?

USED BY PERMISSION whatsyourgrief.com
We encourage you to visit their website for more tips

The tips we’re sharing here are designed to address avoidance of grief behavior if you’re worried it’s well beyond the healthy type. Chronic, pervasive avoidance feels useful when coping early in grief (how would you have planned a funeral or made it through a workday without it?) but can make it hard to adapt in the long run. So how do you break the habit of avoiding your grief?

We’ve gathered some of our tips for facing your avoidance of grief. This isn’t a comprehensive list, but rather a place to get you started.

Tips to Stop Avoiding Your Grief

1) Remember that hard emotions are hard, but they aren’t bad or dangerous. It is okay to cry and yell and scream. Remind yourself that it feels excruciating, but you will survive the feelings and you are safe. The more you allow yourself tolerate the distress of hard feelings, the more practiced you become. The emotions are still just as heavy, but actually feeling them is the first step towards slowly getting stronger and better able to carry them.

2) Drop the self judgment. Sometimes avoidance happens because of the pain of the emotions themselves. But sometimes there is an added layer of pressure that we put on ourselves through judgment, saying things to ourselves like, “It

is wrong to feel this way”, “I should be dealing with this better”, “this shouldn’t be so hard”, or “I should be over this by now”. Remember, there is no timeline for grief and there are no “shoulds.” Emotions aren’t good or bad, they just are. Whatever feelings come up, try to just notice them from a place of curiosity, awareness, and non-judgment.

3) Learn how to self-soothe. Okay, I know that “self-soothe” is a weird, mental-health-jargon term. But I’m not sure of a better word. “Self-soothing” is just what it sounds like: calming and comforting yourself when you are feeling difficult or uncomfortable things. If you are going to change some of those chronic avoidance patterns and feel difficult feelings, knowing the ways to take care of yourself is important.

4) Identify what you’re avoiding and your avoidance tactics. If you’re going to cut back on your avoidance and start feeling those grief feelings, the first step is identifying what and how you’re avoiding. Remember, this isn’t about ceasing all avoidance. But it is about increasing an awareness of your avoidance so you can cut back in the places you want or need to while embracing moderate avoidance for some temporary grief-relief. Sometimes you know exactly when and how you’re avoiding. Sometimes it can be sneaky. Consider this list as a place to start.

Positive Websites That Can Change the Way You Think

When you are grieving, focusing on bad or sad news is probably the last thing you need. We can all use a little positivity in our lives or at the very least some distraction. Visiting positive websites can give you a mood boost when you need it. Simply type in the names in a Google search.

1. HuffPost: Good News

HuffPost has a large section focusing solely on uplifting news. Some of the stories are merely cute anecdotes about universally mood-boosting topics, such as adorable pets, while others delve deep into current events to find sources of inspiration.

2. Some Good News

The series on YouTube offers exactly what it promises. Every episode begins with John Krasinski’s overview of various uplifting stories from the preceding weeks.

3. Good News Network

Good News Network has been around for more than 20 years now. It’s managed to remain popular that long by offering readers a constant source of positive news stories.

4. USA Today: Humankind

USA Today’s Humankind section is another positive website worth visiting if you need a reminder that goodness still exists in the world. It focuses primarily on stories about people helping others through gestures both big and small.

5. GatheringUs

Losing a loved one is difficult. It's normal to experience grief and loss, especially if you can't be close together with loved ones in-person. GatheringUs is a service that brings people together no matter where they are in the world. By hosting virtual events, homegoings, receptions, and even funerals, you can feel closer than ever with those who matter most. This is sure to add some positivity to your life.

Find more loss & grief on joincake.com

