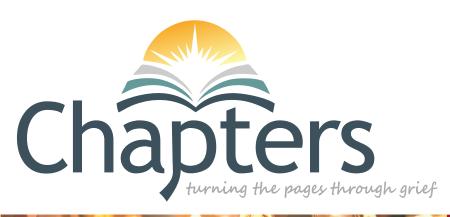


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here are many benefits to having present moment awareness. If you don't want to take my word for it, a quick Google search will connect you with tons of articles about its positive effects. For example, present moment awareness is linked with increased ability to manage stress and constructive coping. Great. If it were super easy, we'd all be doing it... but it's not-especially not for people who are grieving—and that's where our tips come in.

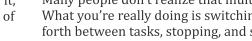
1. Notice the Ways Your Loved One Is Still Present:

Something I find incredibly comforting in grief is the idea that we don't leave our loved

ones behind, we bring them with

us into the present.

If you're finding it difficult to connect with the present because you're overwhelmed by memories of the past, challenge yourself to identify 5-10 ways that your loved one is still present. You may notice them in objects, traditions, your child's laugh, your shared values, the way you continue to talk to them, and so on.



2. Focus On One Thing at a Time:

Many people don't realize that multitasking is a myth. What you're really doing is switching your focus back and forth between tasks, stopping, and starting over again each time. Not only are time and efficiency lost in this transition, but are you ever able to be fully present with either task? If you're like me, the whole time you're doing one task, you're thinking about and planning for the next.

Now, layer grief-brain on top of this process, and you've got a big ol' mess! Think about it: On any random Tuesday, grief wreaks havoc on things such as memory and

> concentration. Add the stress of the holiday season, and you're lucky if you correctly matched your shoes this morning.

3. Talk to Yourself About What You Are

Even better, talk to your loved one about what you are doing!

"On good days, I think of myself as experiencing the physical world for him now...." said a reader on the whatsyourgrief.com page.



"So crying and pouting are off the table. What about passive aggression?"

continued...



"May your walls know joy, may every room hold laughter, and every window open to great possibility."

—Mary Anne Radmacher

...continued from front

She was talking about baking cookies, but I think this idea extends here. Think of yourself as describing the physical world to your loved one. For example, tell them how the holiday decorations look as you put them up or what your kitchen smells like as your cookies finish baking. By illustrating what you're doing, you take the time to notice the intricacies of the moment.

4. Allow Yourself to Lose Track of Time and Get Lost in the Moment:

Okay, okay, so this can be difficult for grieving people for a number of reasons. Remember, it's okay to take a break from your grief. It's also okay to feel things like joy and happiness. Experiencing positive emotions does not mean you are not also grieving.

If trimming the tree is an important event for your family, plan to do it on a day when there aren't a million other activities pulling at you. Schedule more time than you need so you can pace yourself and process different memories and emotions as they come up.

5. Minimize Phone and Social Media Distractions You know this tip had to make the list, sorry!

6. Reduce Avoidance:

Avoidance is a funny coping skill because, a large percentage of the time, it backfires. Psychologists like to illustrate this with the white bear trick (or the pink elephant trick). The white bear trick is when I say to you, "Hey, don't think of a white bear, okay?". Of course you think of a white bear. The point being, sometimes, the more we tell ourselves NOT to think about something, the more it haunts us.

People who engage in chronic avoidance get stuck in a catand-mouse game where they waste a lot of time, energy, and attention running from unpleasant experiences and emotions that will not stop giving chase. And, you guessed it, this type of avoidance distracts a person from the present moment in a big way.

7. Take the Time to Cope With Distressing Grief Thoughts and Emotions:

When you're grieving, the present moment can be a scary place because grief triggers and distressing thoughts and emotions live there. But, the key to coping with these experiences is actually to allow yourself to experience them and find constructive ways to cope with them. You have to find the coping that works for you, but we often recommend things like journaling, creative expression, talking to a friend, and going to counseling. Theoretically, the more one utilizes outlets for coping with their grief, the less distracting it will be over time.

8. Savor Moments of Peace, Happiness, and Comfort: Examples of savoring the moment include thinking about the pleasurable aspects of an experience, expressing gratitude for the moment, allowing oneself to smile or express positive emotions, focusing on the sensations of the moment (i.e., sight, touch, taste), and telling others about the positive experience.

I know this sounds like a lot to people who are grieving because positive moments can feel few and far between. But this is actually an ideal coping skill in these instances because, when you do have a good moment, savoring it allows you to stretch its positive benefit beyond what it would be if you were only paying half-attention.

Sometimes the best advice is a break from advice. Enjoy your favorite beverage and these tidbits of this & that.



- The full moon in December has been traditionally referred to as the **Full Cold Moon** by a number of different Native American tribes. Unsurprisingly, it is named this way because the cold winter months follow it.
- One of December's birth flowers is holly which Celts believed brought **good luck** and protection.





- Turquoise is the traditional birth stone for December and is viewed as a symbol of **good luck and achievement**.
- December 6th is **St. Nicholas' Day**, which some may know as the original Santa Claus.
- December 21st is the **Winter Solstice**, which marks the longest night of the year and is astronomically the beginning of winter.
- The Christmas tree is typically adorned with various decorations, each of which carries a specific meaning. The star atop the Christmas tree is thought to act as a remembrance of the first Christmas night, and candles are frequently seen as a metaphor for the light of the world. Candy canes are often used to represent the shepherd's crook.

What Grief Has Taught Me...

I struggle to accept that good things will continue to happen for me in this life even after the most devastating tragedy changed it. That sometimes a family falls apart after a loss.

That love continues after death and that my son is still teaching me how to live even though he is no longer here in his earthly body.

whatsyourgrief.com



