



Schuler-Lefebvre

FUNERAL CHAPEL

Dedicated To Those We Serve

Caring Connections: Facing the Holidays

The holiday season is fast approaching. There are reminders everywhere we go; Christmas music playing, stores busy with people buying gifts, aromas of baking fill the air, and the echoes of 'A Merry Christmas' are all around us. For many people, it is a time of joy and excitement as they anticipate all of the fun and festivities.

However, for many others, Christmas can be a painful reminder of the terrible loss they have experienced. The first few years following a death can, perhaps, be the most difficult but, even years later, the holidays may lack the joy they once had. One of the worst feelings you will experience following the death of a loved one is that of being alone. It may help you to know what to expect of yourself during this difficult time. For many, the anticipation of the holiday is worse than the actual day itself. The day will come and go, and you will be wondering how you are going to organize preparations for the holiday. There may also be feelings of wishing to avoid the season all together. A sense of pressure to carry on as if nothing happened, and anxiety over trying to do what is right can overwhelm you. Perhaps one of the most unique feelings you might experience is guilt over enjoying yourself at this special time of year. On top of these feelings, you may experience some of the symptoms of grief that you knew closer to the time of death; anger, loneliness, sadness, depression and others. Remember, this is not a regression to a phase you thought you had passed. The holiday season has a way of rekindling some of those feelings. It may be helpful to know that you are not alone in your feelings, and that you are going to be alright.

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There are steps you can take, however, to help to give the holidays a new meaning. The holidays can become a time of peace and reflection, a time to cherish the gift your loved one has been B and continues to be B in the life of your family. Remember to be patient and realistic. Things will not be the same as they were before; therefore, you do not need to do all of the same things. Decide what is important to you for this Christmas, and leave the rest off the list this year; you can always add new things in the coming years as you feel comfortable. Listen to your own heart and know your limits. Become aware of your needs and express them to your family and friends, and encourage them to share their feelings as well, so that, together, you can make your plans for the holidays.

Do not be afraid to say no to invitations, and take on only those obligations you feel you can handle. Take care of yourself physically; eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. With the loss of a loved one, special family traditions may no longer seem valid. It is important to realize that you can change some of those traditions to accommodate your needs at this time. It is the exchange of love - the giving - that matters most at Christmas time.

If you find yourself alone this year, find a way to share a part of the holidays with others and, in doing, so, you may find yourself making new bonds out of shared losses. Allow the tears to come, but look for joy amidst the pain.

Do not deny yourself the gift of healing tears, and don't be surprised to find them coming when you least expect it. Try to remember all the wonderful moments of your loved ones life, and think of all the gifts they have given to you - joy, laughter, affection and companionship. This may be difficult, but the message of Christmas is one of hope. By focusing on your loved ones life, not their death, you can live in hope that the future will be brighter, and some day you will enjoy Christmas again.