



Creating New Holiday Traditions While Honoring the Past

Maria Georgopoulos, LMHC, FT
Director of Bereavement Services
Calvary Hospital/Hospice

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Grief is Our Response to Loss

Besides affecting emotions, grief reaches into every part of life

- Emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Behavioral
- Spiritual



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Holiday Challenges for Grievers

- Grieving the loss of holiday traditions
- Internal conflict about traditions/rituals
- Anticipation
- Social pressures
- Energy levels
- How to handle the "elephant in the room"

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Unique Dilemmas of 2020 Holidays

- Gatherings and travel limited
- Increased separation from family
- Decreased ability to participate in certain traditions
- Increased concern for personal safety
- Increased mental health concerns

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Unique Challenges: Military Families

- Frequent moves disrupt community
- Many non-death losses
- Limited access to email, packages



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Caring for Yourself During the Holidays

- Skip the festivities but you can't "ignore" the season
- Respect comfort level; know your limits
- Manage your expectations
- Participate when you can
- Plan for difficult moments

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Caring for Yourself During the Holidays

Continued

- Spend time with supportive people
- Be honest about your feelings with trusted people
- Find a community of grievers
- Give yourself permission to feel grief
- Give yourself permission to feel love and joy



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Additional Considerations for Military Families

- Keep in touch with other military families
- Stay connected to your networks
- Utilize available support services





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Be Intentional About Self-Care

- Sleep
- Exercise
- Nurturing





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Suddenly I wake with a jolt--and glimpse the world outside of my padded and protective 'fortress of solitude,' and see that the world has continued to turn, and people continue to make their lives as best they can. And I am glad they are--especially our two daughters, each with a career and a wonderful, committed boyfriend/life partner.

Suddenly I wake with a jolt--and glimpse the world outside, where seasons have gone by without my even noticing: it's Autumn. Walking in the city, I look up and am acutely aware of the glorious color in the trees. I then notice the streets carpeted with fallen yellow leaves.

Fall as seen through my eyes is the pathetic fallacy, mirroring my mourning. A bittersweet season, with incredible beauty--a last blazing flash of Hope's vitality and brilliance, too quickly followed by the 'fall' of the leaves, a carpet of yellow going to brown, ground to dust underfoot as fall makes way for winter, leaving me with the loss.

-Written by a grieving spouse



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Thoughts to Guide Your Holiday Planning

- Everyone grieves differently
- There is no "right" or "wrong"
- Include the deceased in your traditions
- Honor traditions that feel right to you
- Identify "hardest" traditions
- Participate in seasonal winter activities
- Make the most of technology



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Thoughts to Guide Your Holiday Planning

Continued

- Limit isolation
- Find out who will be at gatherings, how long they will last, etc.
- Plan an "out"
- The worse has already happened; keep holiday challenges in perspective
- You are not responsible for the feelings of others



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What if You Have Children?

- Plan what you can for the younger ones
- Include the older ones in holiday planning



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Meaningful Ways to Connect: Near or Far

- Make short videos to send loved ones
 - For virtual gatherings, organize videos into a slideshow
- Recordable postcards
- Watch holiday movies you cherish together
- Play virtual board games
- Sing beloved carols together
- Unwrap presents together



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Meaningful Ways to Connect: Near or Far

Continued

- Food memories
- Share old family recipes



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Remembering the Person Who Died

- Make a toast
- Plan a candle ceremony
- Decorate placemats
 - Special memory shared with person who died
- Make and send an ornament to someone
 - Coordinate tree decorating
- Hang a stocking for the deceased
- Bring an old photo to virtual platform
 - Tell the story and share the memory





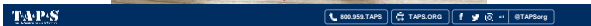
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Rituals You Can Do Solo

- Donate in your loved one's name
- Buy a gift for the deceased and gift it to someone else
- Donate some of their clothes to a homeless shelter
- Send a holiday card to someone from the deceased's life and share a memory with them
- Find ways to offer support to others



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Managing Gatherings in Person

- Get tested for COVID-19 prior to gathering
- Verbalize boundaries around safety
- Attend shorter, smaller gatherings
- Plan activities in nature



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In the Aftermath...

- Plan time to rest
- Plan something to look forward to
- Check in with someone supportive
- This year isn't reflective of years ahead



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We all survive more than we think we can...
Joan Didion



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Questions?

mgeorgopoulos@calvaryhospital.org

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Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

December 1 **Five Things Kids Bereaved by Suicide Want Adults to Know**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
Andy McNeil, MA, Senior Advisor of Youth Programs, TAPS
and **Carla Stumpf-Patton, EDD, LMHC, NCC, FT, CCTP**,
Senior Director, Postvention Programs for TAPS

December 15 **Healing Trauma and Finding Hope in the Outdoors**
Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET
Christine Lynn Norton, PhD, LCSW, Professor of Social Work,
Texas State University

Visit taps.org/institute to learn more and RSVP!

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Please note: The information provided on this program is intended for educational purposes only.

If you or a loved one needs professional support, please contact TAPS 24/7 at 800-959-TAPS (8277).



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About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



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