

Our family serving your family



Senior Trails

A quarterly publication for families and friends at New Vista Foothill Retirement

Fall 2010

Uh-Oh, it's that time again!

Some people would like to skip from October to Mid-January

The holidays are approaching. A joyous time. A festive time. A time when families and friends celebrate the passage of another year and the coming of a new year. Not everyone will feel like celebrating. If this is the first year since the death of a loved one or a divorce, the holidays may be difficult. Since time does not heal emotional wounds, subsequent holiday times may be painful and awkward. Even surrounded by family and friends, griever may feel isolated, alone, and as if no one understands.

As we move beyond Thanksgiving to Christmas, Chanukah and New Year's Day, and a review of the year gone by, we are reminded of the war in Iraq and the continued unrest in the Middle-East, as well as the ongoing threats of terrorism on our shores. We will share a collective sadness about the losses that have affected all the people whose lives have been impacted by the events that have changed our world.

How grief *feels*

Grief is the normal and natural reaction to loss. It is marked by conflicting emotions that result from the change in a familiar pattern of behavior. But from the standpoint of the grieving person, this is how grief may feel:

According to the Grief Recovery Institute, grief is the feeling of reaching out for someone who has always been there, only to find when we need them one more time, they are no longer there.

Adapting to the absence of a loved one is difficult enough. But the first holiday season, with its constant reminders of holiday joy and tradition, can be especially painful. It's normal to worry that you won't be able to handle the pain of that first holiday season, whether the missing loved one is a spouse, parent, grandparent, sibling or child. You may even think you'd rather skip holiday gatherings. Those feelings and fears are not illogical or irrational. They represent a normal, healthy range of emotions about painful loss and our society's limited ability to talk openly and honestly about grief.

What griever want

Several years ago a survey was conducted that asked: "What is the best way to act around someone who has just experienced the death of a loved one?" From the multiple choice answers, 98% of the respondents chose: "Act as if nothing has happened".

We also surveyed those who had experience the death of a loved one in the past five years. We asked them: "In the weeks and months immediately following the death of your loved one, what did you most want and need to do?" 94% responded: "Talk about what happened and my relationship with the person who died."

This holiday season, there will be plenty of hurting people who, given the opportunity, will want to talk about someone they miss. You will be a most cherished friend or family member if the grieving person feels safe enough to talk to you about what is so foremost on his mind and in his heart. If the person doesn't want to talk about it, don't be offended.

On a lasting note

Being afraid of sad feelings can deprive us of the treasure trove of memories attached to relationships with people who have died. Overcoming this fear, especially at holiday time, allows us to claim the full memory of the person we are missing. People are surprised to discover that even though there may be some sadness, there may be plenty of joy as well.

Take the time to share these wonderful tapestries of memories with your families and friends ... and take the time to allow them to share theirs with you this holiday season.

Information in this newsletter was taken from "The Grief Recovery Handbook" published by the Grief Recovery Institute.

Visit Foothill Retirement on

facebook

A *taboo* subject

We all experience losses and we all grieve. Yet, grief is one of the most off-limits topics for discussion in our society. It seems strange that one of the experiences we are all going to have, is the one experience we are ill-prepared for and ill-equipped to talk about. Even more troubling is all the misinformation passed on about grief.

We have been taught to believe that "Time heals all wounds." So people will say, "It just takes time." The griever assumes the advice to be correct, and waits while time goes by. But time is neutral and does nothing but pass.

People also say, "You have to be strong for the children" (or other family members). So we pass that on to the griever, who dutifully acts strong for the kids, while burying their own feelings deeper and deeper. Worse, while acting strong for the children, they demonstrate "not feeling", which teaches the child to hide his or her feelings also.

We have been socialized to believe that intellectual remarks will help with emotional conflict. So griever are told, "Don't feel bad, he led such a full life." Maybe he did. But the griever is in emotional turmoil, and that comment, which may be intellectually accurate is not emotionally helpful.

None of the pat remarks identified above help the griever take those correct and necessary steps. Rather, the griever is led down a path that leads to more isolation and loneliness.

**FOOTHILL RETIREMENT
GRIEF RECOVERY WORKSHOP
Saturday • December 11 • 10 am - 12 noon
Vernoica Scarpelli, Facilitator**

6720 St. Estaban Street • Tujunga, CA • 818.353.3350 • www.foothillretirement.net



6720 St. Estaban St.
Tujunga, CA 91042

*Our family
serving your
family*

License # 197607570