



# FOR EVERY SEASON



FALL 2021

## How Past Traditions Can Help You Cope During the Holiday Season

*By Mallory Grivner, MSW, LSW, and Deacon Rachel Bailey, MAMS, CH*

Grief is one of the most difficult things a person can journey through, and the holidays can be an especially difficult time for people who've experienced the death of someone they love. Regardless of whether the death was recent or happened decades ago, the holidays can stir up a new wave of unexpected sadness.

There are ways to cope with this grief and work through it so the holidays can again become a time of joy. We recommend that you focus on activities that honor your past traditions with your loved one while incorporating their memory into new traditions.

According to William Worden's Tasks of Grief, one of the most important steps in the grieving process is to find enduring and continuing bonds while embarking on a new life after loss.

Here are some ideas on how to do this. If you are hosting a Thanksgiving dinner, consider leaving an empty place for your loved one. If you wish to create a new tradition, you can have the youngest member of your family move into that space.

Other examples include making your loved one's favorite foods or cookies, listening to their favorite holiday songs, hanging a stocking or lighting a candle in their honor. If you chose to include others in these activities, you'll build new traditions that you can look forward to year after year, while still honoring the memory of your loved one.

If it's too hard to participate at a holiday dinner, opt to spend that time volunteering or doing something new and different. While you might still have your moments of grief and tears, and that's okay, honoring old traditions and making new rituals may help you as you navigate this time.

Remember, there is no right or wrong with grief—especially during the holidays. If you need further assistance or ideas, please reach out to the Bereavement Specialists at your local Seasons office.





and other milestones for Tara and each child, for many years to come.

Rita also put together an activity for Tara and the kids to do together at a later date, using Bill's favorite candies and a Bible verse that he held onto dearly: Galatians 2:20. Rita put it all in a treasure chest, with Bill's blessing, as a surprise to the family.

During one legacy project, Rita helped Bill and Tara create a plaster mold of their hands. Between dipping their hands in the plaster and holding still for a long time, the family was in stitches, they were laughing so

## Waves of Love

From the moment Bill signed onto our hospice services, we knew that our experience with him was going to leave a mark on each member of our staff.

For starters, Bill's diagnosis was rare. At just 51-years-old, he had developed a brain cancer that left him paralyzed on one side. It was incredibly tough on his wife Tara and their three young children.

Tara made it clear to us that Bill was leaving the hospital and coming onto hospice services so they could go home and live. The love Bill and Tara had for one another and their children was obvious. Tara told us about the great memories their family had: playing board games, eating dinner as a family, spending time together on trips; all things they could enjoy again with the support of our hospice services.

Aside from symptom management and family support, one of our top priorities was partnering with the Seasons Hospice Foundation to provide legacy projects and grant final wishes for Bill and his family. Our volunteer Rita spent countless hours with Bill writing cards for birthdays, anniversaries



*Seasons Hospice staff helped Bill write cards and record video messages for his wife Tara and their children which will commemorate future holidays and milestone events.*

hard. It was at this point Tara said, "Bill looks so good. So much better than he has in the past year. This is the best quality of life our family has had in a long time!"

Sadly, Bill's health quickly declined. We moved him to our inpatient center, as he did not want to die at home. As a final legacy project, our staff called in a local fire department to visit Bill and gave each child a fire-fighter themed gift.

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Bill was a long-time volunteer firefighter, and this gesture meant so much to him.

It was Bill's final wish to have his family have happy memories of him during this final part of his life, and our staff strategized every day to make that wish come true.

When Bill died, our team was invited to the funeral and many members went to support the family. When they approached Tara to give condolences, she enthusiastically threw her arms around them, saying, "Can you believe he had flowers sent to me at his own funeral?"

As it turns out, the flowers were a surprise even to our staff members, who had been working so

diligently with Bill and the Seasons Hospice Foundation to set up surprises for his wife and family long after he died.

This last gesture of love highlights the true beauty of what hospice makes possible and the waves of love that cannot be undone by death.



## Putting the Pieces Back Together Again

By Robert Zalenski, MD

*The origin of the word "bereavement" comes from shattering or breaking apart.*

When you lose a loved one, that relationship is not only broken apart, but your loss causes your life to break open as well. Once you are "broken," it is important to have support. You need people who will listen to you and care for you, those who will give you a safe space to truly express how deeply the loss hurts, those who can help guide you and give advice and those who will embrace you.

It is normal to feel broken after a significant loss, and part of the grieving process is allowing your broken pieces to fall to the ground. Over time, you'll pick up those pieces, reunite them and allow them to shape you into a new and different person.

You are not "forgetting about" or "moving on" or "getting on with your life." Rather, you are letting the full implications of the loss be understood and realizing the beauty of your gain from having that person in your life.

Put yourself back together in a way that reflects your loved one's contribution to your life and the love that was shared with you. Sometimes, this takes three months, sometimes six months, sometimes two years, or sometimes even longer. Every journey is unique and must be given the support and time to mature and to nurture "the fruits of bereavement."



- Crying is normal.
- Being alone is okay.
- Spend your days as you need to.
- Find ways to heal your spirit.

It can be hard to find time and space for healing in our busy society, but it's important to be accepting of your grief and to ensure that you are getting the support you need as you journey through the process of putting the pieces back together.



Gisèle D. Crowe  
Executive Director,  
Seasons Hospice  
Foundation

## Camp Kangaroo Continues in 2021

In October of 2021, we will begin hosting our Virtual Camp Kangaroo sessions. Going virtual has allowed us to include five additional communities in our outreach, bringing our total number to sixteen!

Each Camp will open and close with a support group for caregivers, and campers will join us for four 1-hour sessions spread across several days. Grouped by age, each camper will participate in

standard Camp Kangaroo curriculum. Families will be sent kits that include the supplies they need as well as blankets and stuffed kangaroos – while we can't be together, we want to continue to create a camp-like feeling of camaraderie. If needed, kits will also include prepaid phones so families without internet access or devices can participate. If you'd like to sponsor one of our campers, [www.seasonsfoundation.org/camp-sponsor](http://www.seasonsfoundation.org/camp-sponsor)

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## Helping Others Through SEASONS HOSPICE FOUNDATION

### SEASONS HOSPICE BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT



*"Men fear death, as if unquestionably the greatest evil, and yet no man knows that it may not be the greatest good"*  
~William Mitford

Bereavement support for loved ones is an essential component of Seasons' mission. Thus far in 2019, we have provided outreach and grief support services to more than 20,000 family members. Seasons offers several opportunities for families to find support. Trained counselors provide:

- Support groups
- Individual counseling
- Check-in phone calls
- Supportive mailings
- Services of remembrance
- Educational workshops
- Online resources



These services are offered free of charge for families, friends and caregivers of Seasons Hospice patients. To learn more about support groups available in your area, please visit [www.seasons.org/bereavement](http://www.seasons.org/bereavement) If you are in need of you are in need of support, please reach out to your local hospice care team.