



# Coping Through The Holidays



"So it's true, when all is said and done,  
grief is the price we pay for love."

-E. A. Bucchianeri



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a sprig of green pine needles. The hand is positioned on the left side of the frame. The background is a dark, textured wooden surface. A circular wreath made of brown twigs is visible on the right side. There are also some pinecones and other natural elements scattered around. The overall scene is warm and festive, suggesting a holiday theme.

# Coping Through The Holidays





Holidays have such rich associations for us because humankind created them as a way to honour and celebrate that which is truly important.



Whether you are in the midst of celebrating your own traditions with family and friends or surrounded by the festivities of others, your grief may reappear.



If ever there was a time to treat yourself like a cherished friend, this is it.





**Tips for Coping**



**#1**

Continue traditions that you enjoy and leave out those that you don't.

**#2**

If you have a faith community, use rituals that support you in your grief.

**#3**

Ask friends and family to support you in making plans that you can change according to your needs.

**#4**

Consider cutting back on your holiday traditions.

**#5**

Feel the feelings.



**#6**

Consider alternatives.

**#7**

Create a special decoration, light a special candle, etc., and give it a place of honour.

**#8**

Remember that you can always do things differently next year.

**#9**

Talk with other bereaved people, or with friends and family members who've experienced losses.



A close-up of a silver microphone on a stand, positioned in the center of the frame. The background is a blurred crowd of people, suggesting a public event or performance. The lighting is warm and bokeh, with various colored lights (orange, yellow, blue, red) creating a soft, out-of-focus effect. A white rounded rectangular box is overlaid at the bottom of the image, containing the text.

**Talking with family members**





Although your family members may be grieving the same person's death, each of you have a unique relationship with the person who died.



Consider meeting with your family members prior to special days and holidays so that you can prepare and strategize ahead of time.





**Tips for being with family**



**#1**

Be realistic about what can and cannot be done.

**#2**

Adjust your expectations. Family members may not be able to support one another as they have in the past.

**#3**

Acknowledge difficulties. Discuss how you want to handle the changes of family duties, routines, and roles.

**#4**

Try to tell those around you what you really need, since they may not know how to help you. Ask for understanding if you withdraw from an activity that doesn't feel right to you.



**#5**

Acknowledge and honour the fact that the occasion may be painful at times. Allow yourself to feel whatever you feel.

**#6**

Make room for differences. Talk honestly about needs and wishes.

**#7**

Try to find a balance between who and what is missing, and what remains.

**#8**

When planning family gatherings, explore whether or how to include memories of the person who has died.





# Children and Youth





Children and youth may also experience changes in their grief during special days and holidays – but your child may not have difficulty with the same days that you do and may not share the same reactions or feelings. Ask about their thoughts and feelings. Find out what is most important and remember to include your child when making any plans.





**Tips for talking with Children and Youth**





- What part of this day/event is most important to you?
- What about this day/ event do you think might be hard for you?
- How would you like to remember the person who died on this occasion?
- Is there any part of this day that you don't want to participate in?





**The New Year**





Whether you are facing the start of a new calendar year or the beginning of your second year of bereavement, the "New Year" may bring unexpected feelings.



You might have been looking forward, anticipating the relief, 'healing' and improved well-being you were going to feel at having made it through the difficult times. The New Year might not live up to expectations, and you may find yourself feeling anxious, apprehensive or let down.





**Tips for The New Year**



**#1**

Review the past year – the ups, downs, accomplishments, challenges and 'gifts'. Consider new approaches if old ones aren't working.

**#2**

Don't compare your grief to that of others. Treat yourself with patience and kindness.

**#3**

Purchase a gift for yourself that your loved one might have bought for you.

**#4**

If you feel that friends and family are now less willing or able to support you, consider joining a bereavement support group.



**#5**

Give yourself permission to not be your 'usual self' or to take 'time off'. Allow yourself to do things differently – or not at all.

**#6**

Acknowledge that you are doing the best you can.

**#7**

Allow a place in your life for your grief. Amidst the activities and demands of everyday life, plan restorative time alone or with supportive others.





# Caring for Yourself





Holidays are usually times filled with memories, and you may feel especially tender and vulnerable. Consider making time for yourself and your memories as a part of new holiday traditions. Caring for yourself can be another way of honouring the person who died.





Many times, the more we need to take care of ourselves, the less we do it. You may notice that you have been ignoring your own health or don't care very much about yourself; or you may believe that you don't deserve self-care. If you have a physical problem brought on by stress or an emotional reaction, try to pay attention to you.





# Tips from other bereaved people



**#1**

Exercise. Stretch. Breathe deeply.

**#2**

Rest. Slow down or stop. Grieving requires a lot of energy.

**#3**

Balance time alone and time with others.

**#4**

Eat good nourishing food.

**#5**

Trust yourself. Be guided by your own instincts.



**#6**

Spend time in nature or take a walk around the block.

**#7**

Connect with a new or old friend for lunch, a movie or a walk.

**#8**

Simplify daily life and responsibilities whenever and wherever you can.

**#9**

See your doctor for a complete physical and be sure to let him or her know that someone important to you has died.

**#10**

Be gentle, patient and tolerant with yourself. Take it one step at a time.





Expect your feelings to change, perhaps without much warning. There may be times when you feel sad, angry or frustrated. You may feel loneliness or longing for the person who has died. At other times, you may experience joy and laughter or enjoy yourself for a few moments - and then feel guilty.



Remind yourself that this is part of the healing process. try to make room for your feelings, whatever they may be.



# **Candle Lighting Ceremony**

As we light this candle in your honour,

We light this candle for our sadness

We light this candle for our memories

We light this candle for our determination

We light this candle for our love





# How The Light Comes by Jan Richardson

I cannot tell you  
how the light comes.

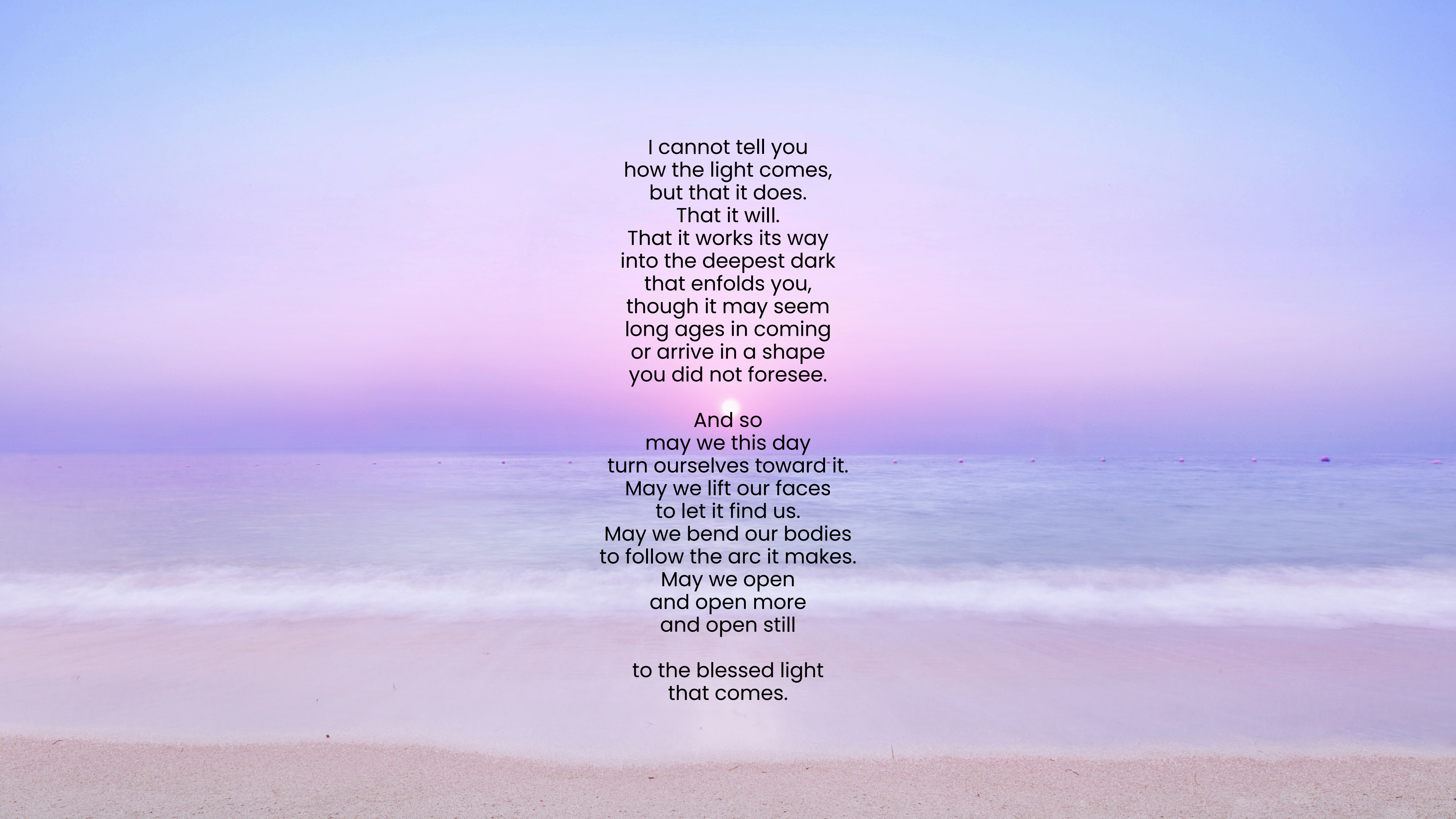
What I know  
is that it is more ancient  
than imagining.

That it travels  
across an astounding expanse  
to reach us.

That it loves  
searching out  
what is hidden,  
what is lost,  
what is forgotten  
or in peril  
or in pain.

That it has a fondness  
for the body,  
for finding its way  
toward flesh,  
for tracing the edges  
of form,  
for shining forth  
through the eye,  
the hand,  
the heart.





I cannot tell you  
how the light comes,  
but that it does.

That it will.

That it works its way  
into the deepest dark  
that enfolds you,  
though it may seem  
long ages in coming  
or arrive in a shape  
you did not foresee.

And so

may we this day  
turn ourselves toward it.

May we lift our faces  
to let it find us.

May we bend our bodies  
to follow the arc it makes.

May we open  
and open more  
and open still

to the blessed light  
that comes.



# Community Engagement

Discussion Groups

Contemplative Grief Station

Experiential Art Station

Refreshments





**#1**

What is your favourite holiday memory with your loved one?

**#2**

Have you started any new traditions in honour of your loved one?

**#3**

What are some ways you have found support from friends, family or other areas over the holiday season?

**#4**

What are some ways that have helped you set realistic expectations for yourself during this time?

**#5**

What is the one thing you can do for yourself to help you get through this holiday season? Can you give yourself full permission to follow through with this one thing?



"Grief has many moods and movements, shapes and textures. It is about how sorrow carves riverbeds in our soul, deepening us as it flows in and out of our lives. There is something familiar about the rising and falling of loss, how it takes us below the surface of our lives and works on us in some alchemical way. We are remade in times of grief, broken apart and reassembled. It is hard, painful, and unbidden work. No one goes in search of loss; rather, it finds us and reminds us of the temporary gift we have been given, these few sweet breaths we call life."

-Francis Weller from *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*



Thank You

