

CHRISTMAS TALK

THEME TEARS

I loved this quote when I read it, “Love begins with a smile, grows with a kiss and ends with a tear drop”.

Each year we have tried to pick a theme that connects us to those that we have loved and lost.

So many of you have come each Christmas to honour that relationship. It’s your own special way of telling them that we miss them here on earth, that we continue to love them and the relationship we have cherished will always be grafted into our lives.

So our theme this year is tear drops.

Science recently has told us that tears rid the body of various toxins and other wastes. Additionally, tears that are released as a result of emotion are chemically different from tears that result because of eye irritation. Emotional tears contain more protein and beta-endorphin which is one of the body’s natural pain reliever.

Through the gift of the tear drops you have received we wanted to dispel one of those myths that rob us of authentically mourning.

That misconception is that tears of grief are a sign of weakness. Society messaging has so often equated tears

with personal inadequacy and weakness but nothing could be further from the truth.

The capacity to express tears shows courage and allows for genuine healing.

Max Lucado wrote this about tears:

“Those tiny drops of humanity. Those round wet balls of fluid that tumble from our eyes, creep down our cheeks and splash on the floor of our hearts. They were there that day. They are always present at such times. They should be, that’s their job. They are miniature messengers on call twenty four hours a day to substitute for crippled words. They drip, drop and pour from the corners of our souls, carrying with them the deepest emotions we possess. They tumble down our faces with announcements that range from the most blissful joy to darkest despair.”

The principle is simple, when words are most empty, tears are most apt.

In the children’s book *Tear Soup*, Grandy has just suffered a big loss in her life and so she is cooking up her own unique batch of tear soup. She blends different ingredients into her own grief process. Her tear soup will help to bring her comfort. Grandy realized that her recipe for tear soup would call for a bigger pot. Grandy knew that in that pot would be all the feelings, all the memories, all the misgivings and all the tears.

She realized that grief always takes longer than we think.

She realized that many people would not be comfortable around her tears so she found a friend, Midge that she

didn't have to pretend and could be authentic about her feelings.

She also discovered that some of her friends over the years had not tended to their tear soup, their pot boiled over and the pot scorched.

Grandy learned that grief, like a pot of soup, changes the longer it simmers and the more things you put into it. In this short children's book Grandy ultimately affirms that the capacity to love requires the necessity to mourn.

Mourning is the outward expression of the things we do in making our own pot of tear soup.

To deny the significance of mourning would be to believe that there is something wrong about loving. One of our greatest gifts from God is our capacity to give and receive love. Likewise it is a great gift when we can openly mourn our life losses.

Psalms 56 vs 8 & 9 says:

You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle You have recorded each one in your book.

My enemies will retreat when I call for help. This I know God is on my side.

Tear bottles were common in Rome and Egypt around the time of Christ. Mourners would collect their tears in bottles on the way to the cemetery signifying the great loss they had incurred in their lives.

The Psalmist reminds us that not only does God know every single tear you have cried but he keeps track of what made you cry and knows your heartbreak so that he can bring comfort to you in a way that is uniquely yours.

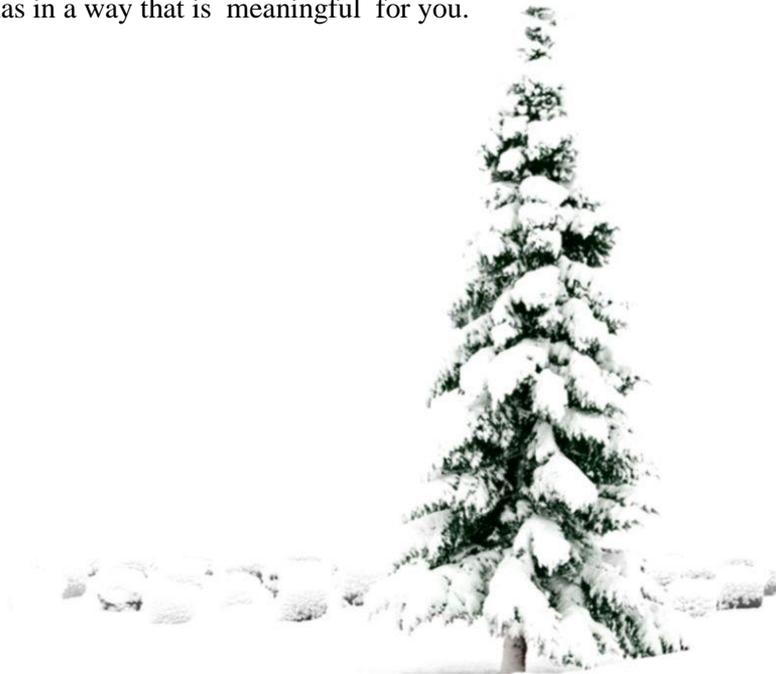
Psalm 34 says:

“The Lord is close to the broken-hearted...”

God is on your side, so continue to allow your tear soup to simmer during this Christmas season.

Charles Dickens puts it very well in *Oliver Twist* when Mr. Bumble declares that crying opens the lungs, exercises the eyes and softens the temper. So don't be afraid to cry. Give yourself and others permission to express their tears of love.

It is our hope that as you set aside time during this Christmas season to remember your loved one and give space to your grief that it will allow you to enter into Christmas in a way that is meaningful for you.



SURVIVING THE HOLIDAYS

With good reason, holiday seasons are often among the most difficult of times for people who have experienced the death of someone loved and the pandemic has added yet another dimension. Holidays are intended to be times of joy, family togetherness and thankfulness. Yet, after a death, holidays often underscore the absence of the loved one and bring feelings of loss, sadness, and emptiness. While there are no simple guidelines to follow that will make it easier to cope with the grief you may experience during the holiday season, perhaps the following suggestions will make this more bearable.

1. Realize that the anticipation of pain during the holidays maybe worse than the actual day.
2. Be aware and tolerant of your inability to function at optimum levels during the holidays. Feelings may leave you fatigued with low energy. Don't set unrealistic expectations for yourself. Break plans and tasks into smaller, more manageable chunks, goals you can achieve.
3. Acknowledge and accept your feelings. Sadness and tears are normal and do not ruin the holiday for you and others. Sometimes

you may have feelings of guilt if you do find yourself enjoying some of the festivities. This does not mean you are forgetting your loved one, you are simply feeling a sense of being alive. Be compassionate with yourself and let emotions happen.

4. Communication - decide with your family what is important to make the holidays meaningful and bearable. Re-evaluate priorities and re-examine family traditions. Ask yourself: Do I really enjoy doing this, or am I doing it just to be doing it in the spirit of tradition? Would Christmas be Christmas without it?
5. Don't be afraid of change. Realize that doing things differently this year does not make it a permanent change. Create new traditions; alter old customs slightly so that they don't highlight the absence of the loved one. Below are some suggestions from families who have already experienced a holiday time without their loved one:
 - have holiday dinners at different times from past years.
 - open presents on Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning.
 - let children take over decorating and cookie baking.

- prepare different holiday dishes.
- celebrate holidays at another family member's home.
- Prepare a favorite recipe that was special to the person you have lost

6. **Plan ahead.** Schedules often help in not being caught off-guard which may result in fear, panic and anxiety. Be flexible in making schedules and plans and allow for changes. Make shopping lists so that on a "good" day you can get a lot done and feel productive. If getting out to shop is the problem right now either because of how you are feeling or Covid 19 guidelines, perhaps do your shopping online.
7. Embrace your treasure of memories. Memories bring sadness, but they also bring the warmth of remembrance. They are an important part of your life and should not be ignored. Include your loved one in conversations; reminisce about past holidays you shared together. This is part of the grief process necessary for healing to occur, it does not stop just because it is a holiday. In fact, the holidays usually intensify it. Give yourself permission to have joy when you can and grieve when you have the need.

8. Rethink the meaning of the holidays.
Explore your faith and belief systems. If these have been an important part of your life, use them to draw hope and strength
9. Remember and honor your loved one with a memorial.
 - *place a special ornament on your Christmas tree.
 - *have a memorial candle to be lit during the holiday season
 - *make a donation to a favorite charity in memory of your loved one.
10. If you feel you have the energy and are ready within yourself, do something for someone else. Although you may feel deprived because of your loss, reaching out to another can bring you some measure of comfort and fulfillment. Many of the volunteer opportunities have changed because of the pandemic but you may find a way to reach out safely during the holidays
 - *supply food to a needy family.
 - *drive a route for Meals on Wheels during the holidays
 - *charitable organizations may have suggestions that are Covid safe.

These holidays will be different, and for grieving people it is easy to become overwhelmed.

There are no right or wrong answers; no absolute rules. Everyone handles grief differently, what works for some may not work for others.

COMMUNICATION with your family is so important. Talk it over and come up with what is most comfortable for you and your family.

Be compassionate with yourself, give yourself permission to experience your feelings, and allow yourself to be embraced by others by surrounding yourself with caring, compassionate people in the ways you have found to be safe in the pandemic.



**Thank you for being a part
of our 2020
Christmas Rememberance**

**Thinking of you and your family
this holiday season.**

Ros and Glenn Crichton