A close up of a plant

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***by Joy Gaertner***

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***You may find that you are approaching this holiday season with a sense of dread due to the losses that you have experienced…the death of a loved one, a divorce, a lifestyle change, or estrangement that sets the situation where people who were important in your life are no longer present at your holiday celebrations and rituals.  For some people, anticipating the upcoming occasion is worse than the actual day.  Discover a plan to help you walk through the holiday in a way that honors your loved one and finds peace for yourself.***

***Here are ten tips. The first five relate primarily to the death of someone important to you. That person might have been a loved one or may have been what we call a "less than loved one," but you will probably still be affected by their absence. The second set of five tips relates either to the death of a spouse or to divorce. We are not comparing those experiences, but we suggest that the tips can be helpful in either situation.***

**Holiday Grief Tips**

**The Death of Someone Important to You:**

1. Don't Isolate Yourself. It's normal and natural to feel lost and alone―but Don't Isolate―even if you have to force yourself to be with people and participate in everyday activities.
2. Don't misuse food or alcohol to cover up or push down your feelings. As children, when we were sad about something, we were often told, "Don't feel bad. Here, have a cookie; you'll feel better." The cookie doesn't make the child feel better; it makes the child feel different, and the real cause of the sadness is not addressed. When we get older, alcohol and drugs are used for the same wrong reasons―to mask feelings of sorrow.
3. Talk about your feelings, but don't expect a quick fix. It's essential to have someone you trust to talk to about your memories and the emotions they evoke. Ask your friend to listen to you and not try to fix you. You're sad, not broken; you just need to be heard.
4. While talking about your feelings is important, don't dwell on them. Telling the same sad story over and over is not helpful―in fact, it can establish and cement a relationship to your pain. Better to just make a simple statement of how you feel in the moment. For example, say, "I just had a sad feeling of missing him."
5. Time doesn't heal—actions do. The myth that time heals a broken heart is just that. Time can't heal a broken heart any more than air can jump into a flat tire. Time just goes by. The actions you take within time can help you feel better.

**Death of a Spouse or Divorce:**

1. Just because you feel lonely doesn't mean you're ready to start dating. Don't start dating while your heart is still broken, or you will guarantee the next relationship will fail. Being ready to date is a function of the actions you take within time to repair your heart. This is valid whether you're dealing with a death or divorce.
2. Don't get too busy—avoid hyperactivity. Be careful not to get too busy. Being super active distracts you; it doesn't help you deal with your broken heart.
3. Maintain your regular routines. Adapting to the changes in your life following a death or a divorce is an enormous adjustment. You are learning how to move from being with someone to being alone. It's never a good idea to add other changes while trying to adapt to so much disruption in your life.
4. Go through the pain, not under, over, or around it. It's very tempting to try to avoid the pain associated with a broken heart. But it's also a terrible idea. Whenever you skirt the pain, all you're doing is pushing it away temporarily. It will always come back to haunt you.
5. Find effective guidance, or you will sabotage your future. While the grief of a broken heart is the normal reaction to the death of your mate or the end of a romantic relationship, it's beneficial to find effective tools to help you discover and complete everything that was left emotionally unfinished. Otherwise, you will drag your emotional baggage into the next relationship and ruin it before it starts.

For most people, the first holiday season after a death or a divorce is the most painful. But that's not true for everyone. For many, the second, third, and subsequent years are painful. Since time doesn't heal emotional wounds, people often report feeling worse as years go by. No matter when your loss occurred, it's essential that you become aware that recovery is possible and to learn which actions will help you.

Memories are common this time of year, but when those memories turn painful, you are experiencing unresolved grief.  The Grief Recovery Method® will help you find the healing and peace you're looking for!  Call 865-963-9221 for more information.

You are invited to a one-hour online **Walking through Holidays with Joy** workshop.  For information on dates/times and Zoom link, please email me at [joy@walkingwithjoy.com](mailto:joy@walkingwithjoy.com).

**ABOUT JOY:**

**Walking with Joy** ~ Loss & Grief Recovery… **A Path to Hope and Peace**

* The Mission of Walking with Joy is to ensure all people impacted by loss and grief are empowered with knowledge, strengthened with actions, and equipped to transform their lives and restore relationships as they gain emotional, relational, and spiritual freedom
* Walking with Joy comes alongside individuals, helping them break harmful cycles and transform their pain into peace through:
  + Equipping Small Group Workshops
    - Grief Recovery Support Group - 1-on-1 and small groups
    - Make Peace with Your Past
    - Self-Care for Serenity
    - Begin with Self-Love
    - Alone, not Lonely

Life can be messy and rarely turns out the way we plan.  Sometimes, that leads us to be depressed, hopeless, or discouraged.  Discover new skills to find your way out of the maze of life's struggles and disappointments.  Pain that is not transformed is transmitted.  **Walking with Joy** helps you navigate life's unexpected twists and turns so you can live a life full of joy and happiness.

For more than 50 years, Joy has served churches, recovery facilities, and para-church organizations here in the States and abroad.  Since 2002, she has focused on walking beside individuals who have experienced loss & grief.  As a Certified Advanced Loss and Grief Recovery Specialist, she offers Small Group Workshops and 1-on-1 sessions to others to help them discover a process to move beyond pain caused by death, divorce, loss, or lifestyle change. Joy also partners with Mynatt Funeral Home as a consultant for their Grief Recovery program.

Joy shares her experience, strength, and hope so that others can find a path to hope and happiness as she did.  She is passionate about enabling others to find their healing path and begin living from a place of peace.

Joy has two married children,  five "grand princesses," one "grand prince," and one great-grandson.  She loves traveling, flower gardening, reading, photography, and taking "mystery rides" with her grandchildren and great-grandson.

More info: https://walkingwithjoy.com/