



The Champion

Volume 7

A Champions Christian Counseling Center Publication

December 2003

Seven Holiday Gifts for the Grieving

Paula Whitaker, M.Ed., MA, LPCI

The Gift of Hospitality

Include a grieving friend in some of your holiday plans even if he or she has relatives nearby. Sometimes it is easier to be with people who aren't emotionally involved in your sorrow. An evening drive to see the Christmas lights or a holiday program at church can be a welcome break.

The Gift of Holiday Baking

A person who enjoys baking might tell a grieving friend that she will deliver ten dozen cookies during the week before Christmas for her to keep or give away. Twelve gift-wrapped treats with Scripture of encouraging notes attached—one to be opened each day during the twelve days before Christmas—can be fun as well as comforting for a hurting person.

The Gift of a Memory

Hope and healing often begin by recalling memories. A photo you took of the one who died, a story about something the deceased did for you, a Christmas tree ornament of a plant that can grow in a garden will all bring warm thoughts of the person no longer here.

The Gift to Coax a Smile

Grieving people need something to unwrap, a surprise, a reminder that somebody loves them. It is best if it doesn't identify with their loss in any way. Opening a gift can be a reminder that life goes on, and dreams still come true, even in the midst of heartache.

The Gift of Help

A homemade, hand-written coupon might be redeemable for four hours of babysitting or washing the outside windows on a sunny day. A coupon good for dinner the day after Christmas or for two hours of ironing followed by a movie can say, "I care about you. I want to help."

The Gift of Understanding

When people expect the grieving to forget their pain during the holidays, it is like saying the one who died never existed. Talking about memories is important that first year. The gift of a 24-hour burning candle will bring comfort during the hours when the bereaved struggles to put her/his grief aside. Without a word spoken, it will flicker, *I remember*.

The Gift of Privacy

There are times when the bereaved wants to be alone. Grown children may hesitate to leave their mother after a father dies but she needs time to be alone and cry. Even a weekend away to a warm, sunny place to bask in the sun allows for healing. Time alone can restore, refresh, and bring peace.

Barbara Baumgardner, author of "A Passage Through Grief: An Interactive Journal"

FREE WORKSHOP **Too Blessed to be Stressed**

Tuesday, December 9th

6–7 p.m.

Call: 281-357-4111

Where do we go for Christmas?

By Esther Bird, MA, LPC, LMFT, LCDC

With families spread across the continent (or maybe, the world) planning for Christmas may have already started. There are some tips to keep the stress of the season from getting too intense. One reason for holiday stress is wanting everything to be perfectly wonderful and for all the extended family to unite in harmony. The houses and families in magazines and the TV Christmas specials do not reflect the reality of the holiday. Instead of trying to have a storybook Christmas, keep your expectations realistic. You can practice the 3P's of a peaceful Christmas—**pray, plan and persevere**.

- **Pray**—Look for God's guidance in relating to family members. As God for wisdom and He will give it in abundance. Start by praying for each family member who will attend Christmas.
- **Plan**—Plan the logistics. Plan to answer the question "where do we go for Christmas?" After the where question is answered, focus on the questions of with who and when. With a focus on flexibility, many new ideas can be considered. Many different traditions are represented in a large extended family. Sometimes new activities can substitute for old activities. Sometimes old activities are comforting and relaxing.

—Plan purposeful traditions. Observing a tradition doesn't mean you have to do it every year. It will still be a tradition next year or the year after. A new activity can become a tradition when it is revisited in the future.

—Plan family activities. Make a yearly family scrapbook. Pull out snapshot from last year's celebration or from several family activities during the whole year. Have scrapbooking materials available to arrange and describe the pictures.

—Make dough ornaments. Mix 2 cups of flour, 1 cup of salt and 1 cup of water. Knead together. Roll out and cut with cookie cutter. Brush with beaten egg. Punch hole in each ornament before baking. Bake at 300 degrees until done. Use red or green ribbon and/or yarn to hang the ornament. Leave natural or paint with acrylic. Spray with varnish.

Continued from the front

-Take a holiday tour of lights. Let the kids plan the route. Walk in the neighborhood as well as drive in the community.

-Set up a game table. Have favorite games available and a couple of new games to open and try.

-Celebrate Christmas afternoon. After the presents have been opened and the meal is over, take time to wind down. Maybe even nap in front of the tree or fireplace.

- **Persevere**-When things get stressful, breathe deeply.
 - Turn on some soft music and have a cup of hot chocolate or tea.
 - Read a favorite passage of scripture or Psalm 23.
 - Keep your sense of humor. Christmas is not just about you and your extended family.
 - Think of others. It's a great opportunity to reach out to others in your community. Your extended family may have ideas about how to minister to hospitalized patients, nursing home residents, or Meals-on-Wheels recipients.

Christian Co-Dependency Support Group

Monday nights from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Ten Ways to Relieve the Pressure

By Sally Etherdge, MEd, LPC

1. Enroll in a karate, kick boxing, or aerobics class.
2. Practice the law of opposites. Ex. On busy days spend 10 minutes alone. On days spent alone, go out among other people, etc...
3. Buy a joke book and keep it handy.
4. Stop working for 10 or 15 minutes; relax and ask God to help you through this stressful time.
5. Learn to say NO.
6. Ask yourself, "Will what I'm worried about make a difference in a month or year? If not, let it go".
7. Create a stress box; write down anything causing stress and put it in the box.
8. Do something physical; rake leaves, shovel snow, etc...
9. Close office or bedroom door and do some stretching exercises.
10. Go for a drive in the country, along the ocean or walk in a park.

Merry Christmas from the Staff
Champions Christian Counseling Center

When Your Child Oversteps Boundaries

1. Stay calm.
2. Gather information.
3. Talk to them and listen to them.
4. Share your concern.
5. Explain the repercussions and rewards of their behavior.
6. Connect with other parents and resources for perspective.
7. Set clear consequences.
8. Follow through with consequences.
9. Give positive direction and encouragement for the future.
10. Affirm your love.

40 Often Overlooked Blessings

1. Answered prayers.
 2. Expressions of unconditional love and support.
 3. Your health.
 4. The aroma of something delicious wafting from the kitchen.
 5. An afternoon to do as you please.
 6. Holding your child in your arms.
 7. Delighting in other people's children.
 8. Witnessing the birth of new life.
 9. The fragrance of a vacation day.
 10. Trying something new and loving it.
 1. Two hours in a wonderful bookstore.
 12. A nap.
 13. Realizing that there are no coincidences.
 14. The sacred release of a good cry.
 15. The loyal, loving companionship of pets.
 16. Reading a book that changes your life.
 20. Receiving flowers.
 21. Letting go gracefully without regrets.
 22. A miracle.
 23. Bargains at thrift shops, flea markets, garage sales.
 24. The sense of relief throwing stuff out brings.
 25. Your mentor.
 26. The long awaited phone call with good news.
 27. When the repair bill is less than you'd expected.
 28. A sense of humor during good and rough patches.
 29. Not losing your temper.
 30. Perfect timing.
 31. Fitting into last year's clothes.
 32. Sharing your aspirations for the future with a close friend.
 33. Pampering yourself.
 34. The generosity and hospitality of good neighbors.
 35. Rediscovering old family photos.
 36. Playing hooky.
 37. An unexpected compliment that makes your day.
 38. Completing the crossword puzzle without help.
 39. Paying off your credit card balance.
 40. The sound of raindrops on your roof at night.
- Sarah Ban Breathnach*

