

Holidays Magnify Everything*
By Pat Schwiebert, RN

There is more noise . . . more shopping . . . more sorrow . . . more gatherings . . . more tears . . . more loneliness . . . more decisions . . . more pain . . . more memories. It's no wonder that the bereaved see holidays as something to dread.

Holidays magnify your loss by placing constant reminders all around you of what you are missing in your life. It's at the malls. You'll feel it at church. You'll get it through the mail. You'll hear about it at work. There is no place safe to hide.

There's something about the holidays that tells you you're supposed to feel all filled up. That you are expected to feel as though you just might burst with excitement like you did when you were a kid. But what you are actually feeling is the exact opposite. There's a void that refuses to be filled . . . at least for the time being.

Holidays are about having everyone together. It's a time when we stop our routines and focus on gathering our loved ones around us and creating new memories. That empty chair at the table is a glaring reminder of your loss. Even arranging the chairs so you won't notice the empty seat won't take away the knowledge that someone is missing. Because what your eyes can't see, your heart will still feel.

And most would surely say, "All I want for Christmas is to have my life back to the way it was before my loved one died." This year, all you may be able to do is just get through the holidays, and maybe eke out a special moment or two. And be satisfied with that. But hold on to the hope that loss is not meant to forever take away joy.

Our hope for those in the throes of fresh grief is that someday the holidays will again bring you more joy . . . more music . . . more laughter . . . more gratitude . . . more friends . . . more surprises . . . more festive occasions . . . more memories.

Can we count our blessings?
Can we acknowledge good deeds?
Can we hear the kind words?
Can we see our gains?
Can we thank our friends?
Can we be grateful for our new insights?
Can we smile at the joyful sounds?
Can we admit our disappointments?
Can we count our courage?
Can we still say yes to life?

*From www.griefwatch.com