

Turning a New Leaf



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- Promoting healthy relationships and personal growth from a Christian perspective -

Winter, 2016

A Very Married Christmas

By Angie Cerniglia, Associate Marriage and Family Therapist



It was right after our first Christmas as a married couple, and we were driving home to Chicago on a dark and snowy night in complete silence. Two months prior, not wanting to disappoint either of our families during our first married Christmas, we had declared (all bright, shiny, and determined) that we were going to make all of our family events, and everyone was going to be thrilled. If anyone could make it happen, we could.

Well, Christmas came and went that year, and we did it. We hit every family gathering making sure both of our families saw us during the important events, even if it was only for an hour. We felt we had achieved the unachievable—we had made both of our families happy during our first married Christmas.

Fast forward to the silent car ride where we should have been celebrating our victorious accomplishment. My husband finally turned to me, and we both agreed in unison, “that was awful!” We absolutely hated it. While we had done it all, we hadn’t gotten to enjoy any of it. We had achieved pleasing both of our families, but had forgotten the most important family of all—our own.

I know we are not alone in our naivety nor in our struggle to balance all of the traditions and obligations that come with the holiday season. It is a wonderful and magical time of the year, but it can be easy to get stretched too thin and drained very quickly. The fear of disappointing or letting down your loved ones can take precedence over the needs and desires of your own family. Whether you are newly married and

learning to balance multiple families, or you have had your first child and are trying to establish traditions of your own, it can be difficult to navigate the maze of expectations, and it is easy to get lost. In the years that have followed that first Christmas, the best navigation tools we’ve found to get through the holiday maze are compromise and communication. Try these three things as a jumping off point:

- “ Determine what you are willing to compromise and what is a non-negotiable for you.
- “ Talk openly with your families about how you are feeling about the holiday schedule and what is important to you for your own family.
- “ Remember why you are in the maze in the first place; you have loved ones that want to celebrate the season of the Christ child with you, just as you have desires of how you would like to celebrate the season.

The following Christmas we didn’t achieve the pinnacle

of pleasing everyone. Everyone wasn’t blissfully happy by how we chose to spend our time, and yet, it was an amazing Christmas. We got to see everyone we love, spend time together, and during the drive home we felt empowered, not by achieving perfection but by realizing we had remembered to make our own little family a priority.

8 Tips For a Low-Stress Holiday

1. Set reasonable expectations
2. Create a budget for holiday gifts and stick to it!
3. Schedule weekly date nights.
4. Talk through past holiday hurts to keep them from reoccurring.
5. Don’t Forget to say “Thank You.”
6. Be Your spouse’s Secret Santa.
7. Schedule some quiet time.
8. Remember the importance of routines with children.

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Our Mission

To promote healthy relationships, personal growth and healing through counseling, education and consultation from a Christian perspective.

Why is your school thankful for New Leaf?



- Written by Carol Moxey,
Vice-Principal at Crown Point
Christian School

In the last seven years as a Christian School administrator, I have had the privilege of working through many good times and tough times with families. The principal's office many times becomes a

safe haven for parents to come and share anxiety-filled events in their lives, such as:

"My wife moved out last night, so please let my children's teachers know they may be distracted or sad in class today."

"I just found out I have cancer, and I'm so preoccupied with it that I can't give my kids the help they need."

"The kids' older brother was arrested last night, and they watched from the window as he was cuffed and put in the squad car."

"While backing the car out of the garage this morning, I ran over our dog, so please give a little extra grace to my kids if

they seem off today."

"My father-in-law passed away last night, and my sons were very close to their grandpa. How can I help them through this?"

In times like this, academic excellence takes a back seat while I try to listen, comfort, and empathize. While I can pray with them and love on their children, I also know my expertise is limited in comparison to trained professionals. It's wonderful to have a Christian agency like New Leaf Resources to refer people to when their needs for restoring "Hope, Help and Healing" are critical and require the assistance of licensed therapists.

From the Executive Director, Terry Top

Thank you! Your partnership with New Leaf—whether as a client, donor, or prayer partner—is essential in the mission of New Leaf Resources. I was recently asked, "What makes your ministry distinct?" In order to answer, I reflected on the philosophy of New Leaf. I want to share those core beliefs with you so that we remain united and clear about the life-changing impact of our shared mission.

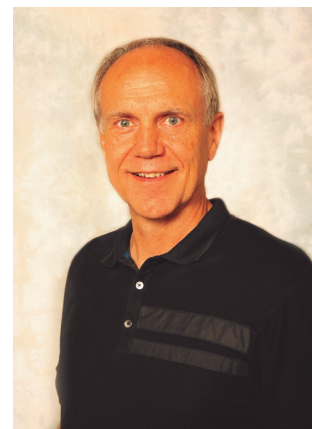
At New Leaf, we believe that all people are created in God's image and have immeasurable value, regardless of their life circumstances. As an organization and as individuals, we openly acknowledge our own brokenness and dependence on God's healing grace and

love in our lives. We believe that God works compassionately in the lives of people, calling and equipping us to participate in this ministry. This is a grace at work, the movement of God's redemptive activity which calls upon the gifts, skills, training, and experience of the staff to encourage, promote, and facilitate this process of healing in our broken world. We seek to bring Christ-like care, restoration, and hope in a manner which is sensitive to the complexity of the human condition, which includes the mental, emotional, physiological, social, and spiritual dimensions.

We believe that ministry grows out of community. The quality of our staff life and the health of our organizational functioning are directly correlated with the quality of care we have to

offer. In this ministry we seek to proclaim and embody God's forgiving and reconciling love. It is our goal that God's ministry of grace and love be reflected in our self-care, our communal life, and in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for helping individuals find hope, help, and healing at New Leaf Resources.



How to Help A Grieving Person

By Kari Poortinga, former New Leaf Resources client



It started out as a normal Friday morning in February. My husband was showing some alarming symptoms, so we went to the hospital. By early afternoon, I was a widow. At the time of my husband's death, our son was 14 months old, and I was 18 weeks pregnant with our second son. Losing my husband so unexpectedly felt like I had sustained a gaping chest wound the size of a basketball.

The days and weeks that followed this devastating blow were a whirlwind. Dealing with death brings on a tornado of raw emotions. The aftermath is chaos for those closest to the bereaved and awkward for those looking in. I could easily sense how uncomfortable people felt around me. If the roles had been reversed, like them I would have wondered, *What should I say? What should I do? I want to help, but I have no idea how.* The vast majority of people were very kind and helpful. And among all those thoughtful people, some really nailed it.

I would like to share some of

my experiences so that if you know someone who is dealing with a tragic loss, you might have a better idea of how to help.

Mirror the Grieving Person

Let the grieving person lead the attitude and emotional state of your interaction in social situations. This is especially important during the first few days or weeks following a tragedy. So if the grieving individual is somber, be somber with her. If the person wants to chat, then chat. If he wants to sit in silence, follow his lead. Don't feel like you are less of a friend if the grieving person wants to have an ordinary conversation with you. I felt comfortable crying and grieving with some people, while others were a welcome distraction from my pain. Both roles are important. Being able to take a step away from the tragedy and have a normal interaction was just as cathartic as breaking down in tears.

Offer Specific Help

I have been fortunate to have many people offer to help. I can't even fathom how many people said, "Let me know if there is anything I can do." That is a kind thing to say. However, it is general, and the grieving person may not be able to immediately process what kind of help she needs. So I found it extremely helpful when people would offer specific forms of help. A church member who watched her grandkids every Tuesday offered to watch my son on those days. That was outstanding. I was able to schedule my doctor

appointments and my grief counseling on those Tuesdays because I knew I had someone to watch my son.

When offering help, be clear and precise. Make it easy for the person to accept or decline the offer. Also, consider the timing. I couldn't process help that was offered at the visitation or funeral. It was more helpful a week or two later.

Avoid Giving Advice

Very few of us are comfortable with death, and sometimes we talk or give advice to cover up our discomfort. But in my experience, less is more when it comes to words. My wound is my wound; each person's pain is unique. It is unlikely that others can comprehend what the grieving person is feeling. So keep in mind that giving advice or quoting Scripture may not be well received immediately following a tragedy. The grieving person may not process or remember anything you say at that time. If you feel strongly that you have some valuable advice to share, include it in a card or note. That way she can choose when to read it and how to use it.

We can glean a lot of useful information about dealing with a grieving person by looking at the book of Job. Job's three friends sat with him for a full week in shared, silent grief. But after that first week, his friends filled the

air with high-sounding advice. They offered models of what not to say. Their arguments only made Job feel worse, and in the end God dismissed those friends with a scowl. As it turned out, compassionate silence was the most profound way to help Job deal with the tragedy.

Death is awful, but God is faithful. Death is painful for everyone, but God's people who showed me love reflect God, my ultimate comfort. I may be wounded, but I know the omnipotent Healer, and I have seen the love of Christ through countless people. Being on the receiving end of the visitation line gave me a new perspective about walking alongside a grieving person.

* Abridged article reprinted from *The Banner* magazine, November 10, 2016.

"Counseling has helped on many avenues. Although my grief was deep and profound, I was able to delve into aspects of my life that were a part of my reckoning with loss. New Leaf's counselors have great kindness and compassion. They look at who you are and what you need."

- New Leaf client, sudden death of son



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**"What seems to
us as bitter
trials are often
Blessings in
disguise."
- Oscar Wilde -**

Kass' Quotes

A compilation of Therapist
Kass Cooper's favorite quips & quotes,
humorous & inspirational.

Page 4

Winter, 2016

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Give a Christmas gift to New Leaf



The holidays can be difficult for people struggling with family issues, addictions, anxiety, or depression. Many of our clients require financial assistance so your gifts to New Leaf this holiday season are vital.

Can you give a gift to provide hope, help, and healing this Christmas?

Simply return your gift in the enclosed envelope or visit www.newleafresources.org to impact a life today!

New Leaf Resources is...

A **professional mental health agency** which provides counseling and consultation services to individuals, families, couples, children, churches, schools and businesses.

A **ministry** which brings the best possible care to those we serve, striving to reflect God's grace and love to all who seek help.

A **community resource** offering educational services, prevention programs, training, support and coaching.