

Turning a New Leaf



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Coping with Grief and Loss During the Holidays

By Caryn Johnson, Adult and Adolescent Therapist



"Grief is in two parts. The first is loss. The second is the remaking of life."

— Anne Roiphe

When thinking about the holiday season, it usually evokes thoughts of joy, gift giving, traditions and celebrations with friends and family. But for some the holidays can be overshadowed by the loss of a loved one. The loss doesn't have to be recent to trigger the grief. Watching others celebrate can be painful and overwhelming especially with the realization that the holidays will never be the same.

I am reminded of a quote from Earl Grollman – "Each person's grief is unique as a fingerprint or a snowflake." Grief is a natural response to loss. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, no schedule for grieving to be completed, reaction and processing varies from person to person. It is

understandable that these feelings can be compounded during a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. There are many different ways that grief can present itself: difficulty remembering or concentrating, tiring more easily, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, difficulty being around others, feeling sad, numb, angry, or having a low tolerance level.

If you are experiencing grief and loss, here are a few helpful suggestions to help with what you may be undergoing during the holidays:

* Be prepared for grief triggers – there may be certain objects, songs, food, traditions or remembrances that may trigger strong feelings of grief. Having a way that you can make the triggers more manageable, such as planning for a way to discreetly leave the situation may help lessen the anxiety. Don't feel guilty about your grief. It is important to be conscious of your limits.

* Be honest and communicate clearly – Don't be afraid to let people know what you are willing and able to accept. It is okay to let family and friends know how you feel or if you just want to be heard. Ask for support from friends and family who will listen to your grief experiences without giving unsolicited advice.

* Participate when able – it is normal when you grieve that you may not want to engage in any gatherings but it is important not to isolate yourself as it may make the emotions and feelings you are experiencing worse.

* Think about traditions – acknowledge that things will be different. Relieve some of the sadness by determining which traditions you want to keep, which you want to change, and even creating new traditions or commemorations.

* Remember to take care of yourself – don't binge on food or alcohol, don't try to keep yourself constantly busy. Doing this may distract you temporarily from the grief and sadness, but it doesn't make those feelings go away or recover from the grief.

"Grief is like an ocean, it comes on waves ebbing and flowing. Sometimes the water is calm, and sometimes, it is

overwhelming. All we can do is learn to swim." – Vicki Sweson
Remember that there is no normal way to grieve. If you find yourself struggling with the grief and loss, know that it is okay to allow yourself to grieve, to be patient with yourself and to be willing to change. If you are having difficulties managing your grief or find that it is interrupting your daily life, it may be beneficial to seek grief counseling or join a grief support group.

Remember that during these stressful and uncertain times, there are several supports available to you. New Leaf's therapists are always here to help you and your family. Call us at (708) 895-7310 to schedule an appointment. Additional resources can also be found at www.newleafresources.org/covid19.cfm.



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LCPC is a licensed professional counselor who sees clients in New Leaf's Lansing, Illinois office.

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Our Mission

New Leaf Resources promotes healthy relationships and personal growth through counseling, education, and consultation from a Christian perspective.

Hope in the Darkness

By Corky DeBoer, Executive Director



“Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

– Desmond Tutu

By the time you read this letter, it will be Thanksgiving, followed by the Advent season. The candle lit during the first Sunday of Advent is appropriately called “The Candle of Hope.”

Many of us, along with those we love, may be longing more than ever for the light emitted by “The Candle of Hope.” As I write this, the pandemic seems to be gearing up for another surge in our country. The presidential elections are less than a week away and tensions are running high. The anxiety brought about by so much uncertainty is taking its toll. Even now, we are doing our best to navigate decisions regarding how to celebrate safely our holiday gatherings with family. Many are struggling with their physical, financial, social, emotional and possibly even their spiritual health.

“The Candle of Hope” points us to the prophecies that were fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus. Despite all of

the darkness, there is light! “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). “They will call him Immanuel, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

During this trying and challenging year, many of us have experienced “Immanuel, God with us” as we leaned into and found compassion and care through our faith community, family, and friends. Many have also experienced “Immanuel, God with us” through our Christian therapists.

I am so grateful that help, HOPE, and healing continue to be experienced by children and people of all ages through the support of our skilled Christian therapists. I am also grateful for all who continue to pray faithfully for, and financially support, our ministry. We have been providing excellent care, support and guidance to our clients for more than 40 years, and the need for our ministry now is as great as ever.

Here are some specific ways that you can help us continue to bring HOPE during these unprecedented times:

- * Pray for the health of our ministry team and their loved ones;
- * Pray that God will provide more Christian therapists to join our team;
- * Give generously! Additional monies are needed for our Marty Doot Client Assistance Fund. Each year, \$125,000 - \$150,000 is required to provide therapy services to those who do not have insurance or are unable to pay the portion that insurance does not cover.

Thanks again for your interest in and financial support of New Leaf Resources. We need you!

Through your prayers and ongoing support, more and more people will experience the healing touch of God, will find hope again, and will be able to see once more that there is light despite all the darkness.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” – John 1:5

Please take a moment right now to pray for those whose lives have been severely impacted by the pandemic, by loss of jobs and income, loss of opportunities, loss of health and loss of family members or friends who have succumbed to COVID-19. They especially need our prayers—and the counseling services that New Leaf provides. Your financial gifts make it possible for us to help more people, particularly those who have been hardest hit in so many ways during this time of great upheaval. Please consider a gift of any amount so that we can continue to minister to those in need.

Blessings to you and your family from all of us at New Leaf! And thank you for your help as we strive to help hurting people of all ages.

In God's Strength,

Rev. Corky DeBoer



Finding Gratitude When Life Is Hard

By Lisa Schoon, Marketing Communications Director



There's no doubt that 2020 has been a difficult year for many of us. COVID, political tensions, e-learning, isolation, and financial insecurity have raised anxiety levels throughout a world population that already was dealing with difficult life challenges. During these times, it's easy to focus on our personal burdens but especially during the holiday season, there are benefits to turning our focus outward. Practicing gratitude is deeply tied to happiness and life satisfaction. While it's easier to feel grateful when life is going your way, the true test is when times are tough. So how can we boost our

gratitude levels this holiday season?

Keep a gratitude journal. Each day, try to list at least one relationship and one opportunity for which you are thankful. Our relationships have the greatest impact on our lives and a focus on opportunities helps us remember the good times of the past as well as the potential for good times in the future.

Remember the bad times. It sounds silly to focus on the bad times in order to be more positive in the present but remembering the difficult days, trials and struggles, as well as how you persevered through them, has a way of illuminating the

growth and good in our current lives. Take some time each day to remember that you've made it through challenging times in the past and come out of them stronger to help you see the good in your current life. Don't forget that Thanksgiving itself was declared a holiday during tough times. The first Thanksgiving was celebrated after a tough winter where nearly half of the pilgrims lost their lives. Yet, they declared a day to remember their blessings.

Help someone else. While it's tempting to focus on our own struggles, remember that others are facing different and sometimes more difficult struggles than yours. Bring a meal to a friend who recently had surgery, shovel snow for the elderly man across the street, organize a Christmas caroling event to spread holiday cheer in your neighborhood, or even just string holiday lights for the local kids to enjoy. Spreading joy is contagious.

Write a thank you note or simply say thank you to someone. If someone has made a positive impact in your life or done something wonderful for you, a thank you note expressing your gratitude will help you focus on how you were blessed and also be a



blessing for the individual who receives it. No one comes to mind? Healthcare workers, military personnel, teachers, postal workers, grocery store workers, police officers, and fire fighters are all working hard right now for your benefit and could use some encouragement!

Pray. Go ahead and thank God for that new adorable baby in your life, the moment of laughter experienced with a friend, or that beautiful blanket of snow covering His Creation. Prayer is a powerful opportunity to praise God for His gifts and place our burdens at His feet. In addition to the spiritual benefits of having a closer relationship with our Creator and Provider God, studies now show prayer can reduce levels of anxiety and depression.



Lisa Schoon, Marketing Communications Director

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Give a Christmas Gift to New Leaf Resources Today!



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!



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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.