



CREATING A FAMILY GIFT: On the First Anniversary of My Mother's Death

By Donna George, LMSW, FT
Bereavement Services Coordinator, Hospicare & Palliative Care Services

Holidays can be extremely difficult for those who have experienced the death of a loved one, especially during the first year after the death. At a time when everyone is supposed to be thankful, happy and enjoying themselves, the bereaved often feel sad, depressed, and lonely.

Remembering a loved one at the holidays can provide much needed solace. My mother died just two days after Christmas several years ago. The first anniversary of her death was particular poignant since it also coincided with the holiday season.

I particularly wanted to honor my mother but was faced with the same concerns many of you struggle with. How do I go about remembering her particularly when faced with a holiday so packed with nostalgia? What if other family members react differently and don't find it comforting to talk and remember her when we gather to celebrate the holidays? Even grief counselors struggle with these same issues!

Here is what I decided to do. After some anticipation and planning ahead about what our time together might be like, I provided my siblings - all seven of them - with journals. In each of the seven journals, I recalled a special memory that I had about each sibling with my mother and wrote a personal recollection of this. As a family, we passed around our journals, allowing each sibling to personally transcribe a memory etched in their mind about our mother and that particular family member.

At the end of our gathering, each sibling had seven distinct glimpses of special moments with our mother to take home with them. My siblings were so appreciative of these journal entries. For all of us, it made that very difficult holiday just a little bit more bearable.

My hope in sharing this personal experience is that it would provide you with the impetus to begin to think how you might want to remember your loved one this holiday season. Memories can help sustain us in our loss.

For more information, about the bereavement program at Hospicare, call Donna George at 607-272-0212 or e-mail dgeorge@hospicare.org

