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Navigating Holiday Grief with Mindfulness

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The holidays can stir up a complicated mix of emotions: joy and anticipation alongside sadness, longing and fatigue. For those of us navigating grief, this season can feel like a spotlight on who or what is missing.

This year, that's true for me. My chosen mom, Virg, passed away last November. And this November marks twenty years since my grandma died. These milestones remind me how time can stretch and fold around grief, how our time together seems like just yesterday and forever ago.

In my work and in my own life, I've seen how loss changes and shifts over time. Whether it's a family member, a dear friend, or a part of life we've had to let go of, grief has a way of revisiting us in different seasons. Sometimes we expect it, and other times it sneaks up and levels us with a random song in a grocery store aisle.

Mindfulness doesn't take away the experience of grief; it gives us a way to be with it. It helps us soften around the edges of sorrow and notice that love and pain often coexist. When I miss Virg or my grandma, I try not to push those feelings away. I pause, breathe, and name what's here: sadness, gratitude, tenderness, love.

Here are a few mindful ways to navigate grief:

- **Make space for both joy and sorrow.** This can be challenging. Feeling joy might seem like a betrayal and feeling sad might make you worry you're letting others down. Riding the waves of grief can mean laughing, crying and feeling connected all in the same day—or even the same hour.

Dr. Theresa B. Skaar, is an exceptional educator and facilitator who is dedicated to empowering individuals to meet life's challenges with more curiosity, ease and joy. With a Ph.D. in social psychology, certification in Mind-Body Medicine and extensive training as a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction facilitator, she is uniquely qualified to help people achieve their personal and professional growth goals.



- **Honor your loved one in a way that feels right to you.** Light a candle, share a favorite story, or carry on a tradition that reminds you of them. You might even invite others to share their favorite memories, too.
- **Notice when you need a pause.** Crowded gatherings and constant cheer can be exhausting. Step outside, take a few slow breaths, or place your hands over your heart. Deep breaths and gentle touch help calm the nervous system.
- **Let go of “should.”** There's no single way to grieve. Your pace, your rituals and your feelings are all valid. Find what feels meaningful and honoring to you and your grief and reach out for support when you need it.

Grief isn't something to fix; it's something we learn to navigate. When we make room for what's here, even when it's uncomfortable, we create space to keep growing.

If you're grieving this holiday season, know that you're not alone. There's comfort in slowing down, noticing what matters, and letting your memories sit beside you like old friends.



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'Tis the Upcoming Holiday Season-2025

Once Halloween is over, we turn our attention to the upcoming holidays. It's a time for gathering with family and friends, decorating the house and gift giving. How we decorate and give gifts can change as we age, especially in times of higher prices and fixed incomes.

Decorating and gift-giving are personal. At home, you decorate to please yourself and it makes you happy. When you give a gift, the goal is to make that person excited and it doesn't matter if it is handmade or bought. Sometimes it's the simplest that makes one smile and brings joy: lemons or pomegranates from your garden, a Poinsettia Plant.

People enjoy the aromas of the holidays; the scented candles and reed diffusers, baked goods, including pinecones. Now, you can collect pinecones, wash them and bake them at 200 degrees for 20 minutes (kills the bugs) or buy them at stores or online. Simply place them on a table runner, placemat, door, bowl and add bows, ribbons, ornaments, faux flowers and greenery.

Through the years, we have received both bought and handmade gifts from friends and family. Choosing the right gift means getting to know the person; what they like to do, their favorite foods, hobbies, collections, where they shop, and where they dine. The more you know, the easier it gets.

Enjoy the Holidays.

Judith Kafantaris, Master Gardener

P.S. Don't forget to shop the sales after the Holidays for next year.

Refrigerated Apple Butter

Ingredients – Yield: 4 half-pints

- 🍏 2 tablespoon unflavored gelatin powder
- 🍏 1 quart bottle unsweetened apple juice
- 🍏 2 tablespoon bottled lemon juice

- 🍏 2 tablespoon liquid low-calorie sweetener
- 🍏 Food coloring, if desired

Directions –

Procedure: In a saucepan, soften the gelatin in the apple and lemon juices. To dissolve gelatin, bring to a full rolling boil and boil 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in sweetener and food coloring, if desired. Fill jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust lids. Do not process or freeze.

Caution: Store in refrigerator and use within 4 weeks.

Optional: For spiced apple jelly, add 2 sticks of cinnamon and 4 whole cloves to the mixture before boiling. Remove both spices before adding the sweetener and food coloring.

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