

**TAPS**  
Institute for Hope and Healing

**Coping with Special Days –  
Finding Comfort in Remembering**  
*Patti Anewalt, PhD, LPC, FT*  
*Director of the Pathways Center for Grief & Loss*

April 27, 2021

Presented by Boeing




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**Polling Question**

Which special days will you have to face in the next 2-3 months?  
(Check all that apply)

- Mother's Day
- Father's Day
- A graduation
- A wedding
- A loved one's birthday
- A family reunion

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**Why Are Special Days So Hard?**

They remind you of what you have lost

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### Grief Triggers

- Special places you went with your loved one
- Certain songs or music
- Pictures
- Traditions or rituals
- Television shows you watched together
- Secondary losses

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### Understand The Six Reconciliation Needs of Mourning

1. Acknowledge the reality of the death
2. Embrace the pain of the loss
3. Remember the person who died
4. Develop a new self-identity
5. Search for meaning
6. Receive ongoing support from others




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### Consider the 4 Cs to Cope

- Communicate
- Choose
- Compromise
- Commemorate

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**Communicate**

- Take time to become aware of what you are thinking how you are feeling
- Identify who you can be your "true self" with and share these thoughts, feelings and preferences
- Acknowledge the impact your decisions may have on others and recognize that their needs may be different than yours
- You can build memories as you allow yourself to grow through your sadness

*What we have once enjoyed and deeply loved, we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes a part of us. ~ Helen Keller*

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**Compromise**

- As you communicate with family and friends, you will probably realize your feelings, needs, and the very ways each of you cope may differ
- When their needs are different from your own, you may need to compromise
- Keep in mind that often in multi-generational families with traditions, communication, and compromise are equally important



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**Choose**

- There are no rules as to how to celebrate a special day; everyone will do so differently
- You can create new traditions, keep old traditions, or modify them
- Find a way to honor, recognize, and include your loved one
  - Reminisce
  - Use his or her name in conversation
  - Light a candle, have a moment of silence, make a toast
  - Make a donation to a charity he or she cared deeply about

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**Commemorate**

- Acknowledge that your loved one is on your mind all the time
- Given this, look for ways to acknowledge this during the special days
  - Buy a candle to light on special days, special meals, any time of remembrance
  - Scatter rosemary at the grave site or any special place you shared with them
  - Look at photographs or important mementos
  - Make a memorial within your home
  - Plant something; flowers, a tree or a bush can become a meaningful reminder
  - Tattoos

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**Creative Ways to Commemorate . . .**

Make a quilt from previous ties or articles of clothing –  
[www.lorimasondesign.com](http://www.lorimasondesign.com)



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**. . . Creative Ways to Commemorate**

Plant a flowering tree



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**... Creative Ways to Commemorate**  
Repurpose ties and other items of clothing



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**... Creative Ways to Commemorate**  
Ask children to draw pictures of their favorite memories with their loved one who has died. Mat, frame, and display these favorite moments on a wall as a collage of memories



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**... Creative Ways to Commemorate**  
Frame a cherished garment that belonged to your loved one



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**... Creative Ways to Commemorate**  
 Gather favorite reminders in a special place in your home



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**More Ideas to Consider**

- Allow yourself a "day off"
- Ask family and friends to talk about memories
- Favorite meal
- Make a memory box or memory album
- Write
- Visit the grave
- Take care of your physical health
- Seek support
- Help others in memory of your loved one
- Write a letter from your loved one's point of view



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**The Impact of COVID-19**

- Social isolation
- Post-death traditions such as funerals and family gatherings have changed
- Many feel *more* alone in their grief
- In addition to grieving a loss from death, everyone has lost so much
  - Weddings
  - Graduations
  - Births
  - Holiday gatherings
  - Fewer options for "normal" outlets for stress
  - Movies, restaurants, sporting events, concerts, travel – everything changed!

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### Consider Online Memorials

- Post a poem or favorite story at a memorial site
- Post favorite pictures of family members and friends with your loved one through the years
- Review your loved one's social media posts to find favorite quotes or memories
- Post links to your memorial through your social media pages and encourage others to do the same



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### Special Days and Grieving Children

- Just because they look fine doesn't mean they aren't struggling
- Be open and honest – model for your child
- Convey to your child that as hard as it is to grieve, it's better to grieve together than it is to grieve separately and alone
- Kids need reassurance that *all* their feelings are okay
- Address their worries
- Get their input

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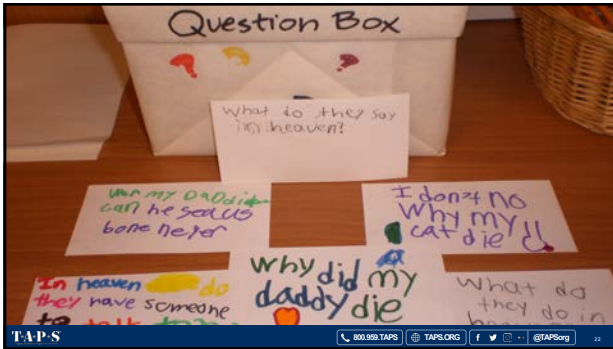
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**The Three Ts to Help Grieving Children**

- Touching
- Tears
- Talking

—Missy Lowery, *Not Just Another Day* (1992)



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*When Words Are Inadequate,  
Create A Ritual*



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**Carry Your Loved One's Legacy Forward**

- Identify one or two traits you most admired about your loved one
- Make a commitment to integrate these traits into your own life

*Remembering HONORS  
and gives special tribute to your loved one.  
It is a life worth remembering.*

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**In Summary . . .**

- Accept the likelihood you will experience pain on that special day
- Allow the feelings and express your emotions
- Remember that grief is affecting you on all spheres (physically, emotionally, spiritually, cognitively, and socially)
- Plan ahead and take charge where you can
- Identify what you are grateful for
- Consider doing something for someone else
- Be gentle on yourself

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*That first special day . . .  
 Hope flickered like the flame of a distant candle.  
 I could see the flame. Yet I could not seem to  
 get close to it. As healing came, hope became  
 more than a distant ray of light. It changed to a  
 glow that could light my way.*

~Eloise Cole



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### Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

**May 20**      **Grief Leadership: Examples from the Life and Service of Captain America**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:30 p.m. ET (1.5 CEs Available)*  
**David F. Carey**, MS, BS, LTC, U.S. Army (Ret.), Combat-Veteran (OIF/OEF)  
**Stephen J. Cozza**, MD, DFAACAP, DFAPA, COL, U.S. Army (Ret.)  
**Jill Harrington-LaMorie**, DSW, LCSW, author/editor, *Superhero Grief*

**June 15**      **Shifting Tides: From Caregiver to Survivor**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET*  
**Lisa Zucker**, MSW, LCSW, CT

Visit [taps.org/institute](https://taps.org/institute) to learn more and RSVP!

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### Upcoming TAPS Institute Programs

**June 29**      **EMDR Demystified**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:30 p.m. ET (1.5 CEs Available)*  
**Howard Lipke**, PhD, editorial board member, *EMDR Journal of Practice and Research*

**July 27**      **Grieving While You Work, Working While You are Grieving**  
*Live Webinar, Noon-1:00 p.m. ET*  
**L. Mark Hensley**, MTS, DMin, PT-Csp, Bereavement Services Manager, VITAS Healthcare

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**About the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®**

Launched in March 2018 through an alliance with HFA, the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® serves as a resource and training center, providing programs for both professionals working in the field of grief and loss and the public.



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*Please note: The information provided on this program is intended for educational purposes only.*

*If you or a loved one needs professional support, please contact TAPS 24/7 at 800-959-TAPS (8277).*

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