

For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died

T★A★P★S[®]

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPS MAGAZINE | WINTER 2021



WHAT'S INSIDE:

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- ★ HELPING YOURSELF GROW THROUGH LOSS
- ★ HEALING YOUR GRIEVING HEART
- ★ THREE WAYS TO BOOST MEMORIES OF LOVED ONES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
- ★ NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS AROUND GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS

THE PERFECT WINTER SCENE
IS PAINTED BY THE SNOW
HOLIDAY DECORATIONS
SEEM EACH DAY TO GROW

THE TRAPPINGS OF THE SEASON
DO NOT HELP ME BE BRIGHT
SOMEONE IS STILL MISSING
THE WORLD JUST ISN'T RIGHT

SO HOW WILL I MAKE IT
HOW TO BE BRIGHT AND MERRY
WHEN THE COMING DAYS
LOOM DARK AND SCARY

I WILL REMEMBER AND SHARE
THE MEMORIES THAT ABOUND
I WILL TALK OF THE LOVE
WITH EVERYONE AROUND

AS I GAZE AT THE SNOW
AND THE LIGHTS ON THE TREE
I KNOW IN MY SOUL
YOU ARE HERE WITH ME

- TANYA LORD

Dear TAPS Family,

Welcome to the Winter Issue of the TAPS Magazine; we are so glad you have found our community. We hope you will feel the hug we are sending you and find support in the resources included here. TAPS is a family, and this holiday season, when there is so much emphasis on families coming together, we can take comfort in knowing we are not alone in our grief.

Throughout this issue, you will read articles of hope and healing written by fellow survivors and members of our TAPS Advisory Board. This publication is yours— your family newsletter, and we are grateful to everyone who contributed.

As we approach the holidays, remember love, the foundation of TAPS. The love we feel in our hearts transcends loss, endures forever, and warms our hearts with precious memories. We are the living legacy of those we honor and remember, and it is through our love for them and the good we do in their name that they live on.

Regardless of which holidays you celebrate or faiths you observe, winter is a season of light. The flicker of a candle, lit in honor of our heroes, and the glow of a fire, warming us, and the twinkle of a star in the winter sky may be, according to native Alaskan lore, our loved ones peering down from Heaven watching over us.

You are our family, and you are loved. Through TAPS, you have resources, support, and care available to you. You are not alone this holiday season; we are here for you— light a candle in honor of those you love and feel comfort in knowing that love lives on.

With hope,

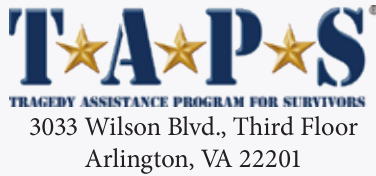


Bonnie Carroll ★ TAPS Founder and President



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SHARE YOUR STORY
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TAPS PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- ★ 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline
 - ★ Peer-Based Support Network
 - ★ Survivor Care Team
- ★ Community-Based Care Connection
 - ★ Casework & Benefits Assistance
 - ★ Suicide & Illness Loss Support
 - ★ Grief & Trauma Resources
 - ★ Education Support Services
- ★ TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®
 - ★ TAPS Online Community
 - ★ Virtual Care Groups & Webinars
- ★ Seminars, Retreats, & One-Day Gatherings
 - ★ Women's Empowerment
 - ★ Young Adult Programs
- ★ Youth Programs: Good Grief Camps
 - ★ College Experience Program
 - ★ Sports & Entertainment Events
- ★ Publications: Magazines, Newsletters, & Blogs



ON THE COVER

Make it a resolution to join your TAPS family in 2022! See page 27.

PHOTO BY KAREN KOHLBERG

ABOUT TAPS

Caring for the Families of America's Fallen Heroes

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we are a family of military survivors ready to embrace and connect all who grieve the death of a military loved one with resources, services, and programs. TAPS provides support to survivors regardless of the manner of death, the duty status at the time of death, the survivor's relationship to the deceased, or the survivor's phase in their grief journey. At TAPS, we open our hearts and resources to the world with our award-winning programs and services to support all military bereaved. TAPS is fortunate to work with leading experts in the field of grief, bereavement, trauma, and peer support to integrate decades of research on military grief into action to help heal hearts.

At TAPS, We:

Honor and Remember: We cherish the lives of our military loved ones and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their service and sacrifice.

Empower: We empower survivors with healthy coping skills, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.

Connect: We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer-based, emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.

Educate: We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.

Create Community: We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live, when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.

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TAPS IS A TOP-RATED
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TAPS exceeds industry standards for financial accountability— we remain committed to fiscal integrity. We are proud to have received many of the top nonprofit charity ratings available and are devoted to enhancing our support of all those grieving the death of a military loved one.



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DEAR TAPS...

FROM TAPS SURVIVORS

"Much like gardening, becoming a TAPS Peer Mentor has helped me so much.

It offers an opportunity to see others grow in their quest to find healing. It helps me focus on the hope I can give another person newer to grief. It's a reminder that it's OK to take a step backward. So often, it's that step backward that spurs two steps forward. And it's a constant reminder that even on my worst day, I will never be alone on my grief journey again."

~ Anne Halvorson
*Surviving Spouse of U.S. Navy Petty Officer
1st Class Kevin Jermaine Wilson*

"TAPS is a caring, nurturing environment – whether online, on the phone, or at any of the seminars or other events they sponsor where we get to meet in person. You are surrounded by people who truly get what you are experiencing, because we have and are experiencing it too. You can say whatever you need to say – you can rant, or you can philosophize, or commiserate – just whatever. We are here 24/7, and we care."

~ Linda Beard
*Surviving Mother of U.S. Navy
Aviation Machinist's Mate Petty Officer
2nd Class Daniel Roy Beard*

"Nothing compares to the healing works that TAPS has provided for us. They have sneaky ways of having you talk about your struggles...I know my dad is smiling down on me tonight. He would be very happy to know that I have this support system that makes it easy for us to laugh and cry all at the same time and for it to be okay."

~ Ashlyn McCain
*Surviving Daughter of U.S. Army Sergeant
First Class Johnathan Bryant McCain*

HOPE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR HEALING YOUR HOLIDAY GRIEF

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. ★ TAPS Advisory Board

Holidays are often difficult for anyone who has experienced the death of someone loved. Rather than being times of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, holidays can bring feelings of sadness, loss, and emptiness.

Since love does not end with death, holidays may result in a renewed sense of personal grief—a feeling of loss unlike that experienced in the routine of daily living. Society encourages you to join in the holiday spirit, but all around you the sounds, sights, and smells trigger memories of the one you love who has died.

No simple guidelines exist that will take away the hurt you are feeling. We hope, however, the following suggestions will help you better cope with your grief during this joyful, yet painful, time of the year. As you read through this article, remember that by being tolerant and compassionate with yourself, you will continue to heal.

TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF

During the holiday season, don't be afraid to express your feelings of grief. Ignoring your grief won't make the pain go away and talking about it openly often makes you feel better. Find caring friends and relatives who will listen—without judging you. They will help make you feel understood.



BE TOLERANT OF YOUR PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL LIMITS

Feelings of loss will probably leave you fatigued. Your low energy level may naturally slow you down. Respect what your body and mind are telling you. And lower your own expectations about being at your peak during the holiday season.

ELIMINATE UNNECESSARY STRESS

You may already feel stressed, so don't overextend yourself. Avoid isolating yourself, but be sure to recognize the need to have special time for yourself. Realize also that merely "keeping busy" won't distract you from your grief, but may actually increase stress and postpone the need to talk out thoughts and feelings related to your grief.

BE WITH SUPPORTIVE, COMFORTING PEOPLE

Identify those friends and relatives who understand that the holiday season can increase your sense of loss and who will allow you to talk openly about your feelings. Find those persons who encourage you to be yourself and accept your feelings—both happy and sad.

TALK ABOUT THE PERSON WHO HAS DIED

Include the person's name in your holiday conversation. If you are able to talk candidly, other people are more likely to recognize your need to remember that special person who was an important part of your life.

DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU DURING THE HOLIDAYS

Well-meaning friends and family often try to prescribe what is good for you during the holidays. Instead of going along with their plans, focus on what you want to do. Discuss your wishes with a caring, trusted friend. Talking about these wishes will help you clarify what it is you want to do during the holidays. As you become aware of your needs, share them with your friends and family.

PLAN AHEAD FOR FAMILY GATHERINGS

Decide which family traditions you want to continue and which new ones you would like to begin. Structure your holiday time. This will help you anticipate activities, rather than just react to whatever happens. Getting caught off guard can create feelings of panic, fear, and anxiety during the time of the year when your feelings of grief are already heightened. As you make your plans, however, leave room to change them if you feel it is appropriate.

EMBRACE YOUR TREASURE OF MEMORIES

Memories are one of the best legacies that exist after the death of someone loved. And holidays always make you think about times past. Instead of ignoring these memories, share them with your family and friends. Keep in mind that memories are tinged with both happiness and sadness. If your memories bring laughter, smile. If your memories bring sadness, then it's alright to cry. Memories that were made in love—no one can ever take them away from you.

RENEW YOUR RESOURCES FOR LIVING

Spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of your life. The death of someone loved created opportunities for taking inventory of your life—past, present, and future. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and assessing your individual situation. Make the best use of this time to define the positive things in life that surround you.

EXPRESS YOUR FAITH

During the holidays, you may find a renewed sense of faith or discover a new set of beliefs. Associate with people who understand and respect your need to talk about these beliefs. If your faith is important, you may want to attend a holiday service or special religious ceremony.

As you approach the holidays, remember: grief is both a necessity and a privilege. It comes as a result of giving and receiving love. Don't let anyone take your grief away. Love yourself. Be patient with yourself. And allow yourself to be surrounded by loving, caring people.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., C.T. is an internationally noted author, educator, and grief counselor. He serves as Director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and is on the University of Colorado Medical School Department of Family Medicine faculty. Dr. Wolfelt is known for his compassionate philosophy model of “companioning” versus “treating” the bereaved. Among his many bestselling books on grief, he has published: *The Journey Through Grief*, *Healing Your Traumatized Heart*, *The Mourner’s Book of Hope*, and *Understanding Your Grief: Ten Essential Touchstones for Finding Hope and Healing Your Heart*. The Center for Loss and Life Transition website lists all of Dr. Wolfelt’s publications.



HELPING YOURSELF GROW THROUGH LOSS

WHEN YOU FACE HOLIDAYS IN GRIEF

William G. Hoy, DMin, FT ★ TAPS Advisory Board

Sights, sounds, and smells of the holidays remind you this year that things are very different. In fact, you may find yourself dreading the holiday season more than any other period since you became a bereaved person.

The holidays are especially hard in grief because they are occasions of great sentiment. Everywhere we go— the shopping mall, worship, even banks, and other places of business— remind us that someone very special has died. Familiar music reminds us of days gone by. The aroma of holiday spices causes bells to ring in our heads. Someone you love has died, and your world is changed forever.

The North American way of facing the holidays in grief is to grope and cope, merely “surviving” the holidays, hoping to “get through them” with a minimal number of scars. But you can change the goal; by applying the following ideas, you can actually grow through the holidays.

ADMIT THE PAIN OF GRIEVING THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS

We must admit the pain of grieving through the holidays. Saying goodbye to a loved one has not been easy. It has felt different than you expected and perhaps you have already not met the expectations of well-meaning friends and family members who want you to “just get on with your life.”

Allow yourself time and space to cry this holiday season. Your holidays cannot be the same as before because of the

“empty chair” at the table. Coming to this realization is painful, and there is no need to try escaping the pain this holiday season.

DO ONLY AS MUCH CELEBRATING AS YOU FEEL LIKE DOING

During the holiday season, do only as much celebrating as you feel like doing. Well-meaning friends or family may want you to attend parties and gatherings, hoping to “cheer you up.” Of course, you may want to participate in some of those events.

But remember that grief is very tiring and that under the best of circumstances, holidays are very taxing. Attending every event, party, or celebration may cause you to meet the New Year feeling totally exhausted. You have permission to say “no,” even to well-intentioned invitations. Simply remind your friends, “My energy level hasn’t returned to where it was before they died; thank you for understanding my need to decline.”

EVALUATE YOUR TRADITIONS AND CREATE AT LEAST ONE NEW ONE

Evaluate your traditions and create at least one new one. If you stop now and make a list of all your holiday traditions, the list may include a dozen or more activities—when you decorate the house, where and when you worship during the holidays, in whose home you share a family meal, and perhaps many others.

You probably don’t need to be reminded that you can’t do everything “just like



when Mom was here,” because it won’t be the same with Mom not here. Since you can’t keep everything “like it was,” evaluate what you want to preserve.

But don’t forget to also create something new. You may want to light a special candle or purchase a special holiday decoration and hang it in your loved one’s memory. Providing gifts to a needy family or hosting an international student in your home can also become meaningful holiday traditions.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Don’t forget during the harried pace of the holidays to take care of your physical well-being. Adequate rest, good nutrition, and moderate exercise are essential for the grief process. Because grief is stressful, you must carefully monitor your consumption of caffeine, alcohol, processed sugar, and animal fat, which are substances that can significantly hinder the body’s ability to deal with stress.

And though you should ask your doctor before undertaking a new exercise routine, a brisk walk or other moderate exercises can help you feel better—even emotionally.

CONSIDER THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF YOUR LIFE

You will also want to consider the spiritual dimension of your life. The holidays have spiritual roots, and many people find themselves drawn to consider spiritual truth, especially when someone close has died. Worshiping with your faith community as the holidays approach or talking with a clergy member can be vitally healing in this period of your life.

EMBRACE YOUR MEMORIES OF HOLIDAYS PAST

Above all else, embrace your memories of holidays past as you face this holiday season. While it is true that the holidays can never be the same, we hold in our hearts the memories of days past. Write the memories down in a book or leaf through the pages of the family photo album. Even though painful at first, “embracing” the memories, and even sharing them with supportive family members or friends, can be very healing in this season of the year.

The holidays will be painful— that is inevitable. But they can also be days of healing as you choose to not just “survive” but actually grow through the holidays.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William G. Hoy, DMin, FT is a TAPS Advisory Board Member, Clinical Professor of Medical Humanities at Baylor University, and Former Director of Counseling Services for Pathways Volunteer Hospice in Long Beach, California. Particularly interested in the influence of social support derived through funeral rituals on the grief process, he is a frequent presenter among professional colleagues in health care. Dr. Hoy has also authored six books and more than 100 papers, journal articles, and educational pamphlets.



YOGA WAS MY SURVIVAL RAFT

A Journey of Healing Through Teaching Yoga

Rayanne Hunter

Surviving Spouse of U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Wesley Hunter



For many years, my family's Memorial Day Weekends have looked quite different from the collective norm. We look forward to the TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar every year, where we gather with a family that we never expected to be a part of—our Gold Star Family. My husband, U.S. Army Staff Sergeant Wesley Hunter, died on September 18, 2008, from injuries he received on February 26, 2008, while deployed in Iraq.

AT TAPS SEMINARS, EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS

My children, Westlin and Tavie, have grown up in this world with other survivors. Every year, as we enter the seminar hotel, they know that we will find familiar faces—old friends and new. They can relax and show every aspect of who they are, embracing an amazing, palpable release and sense of excitement. They can feel all the emotions they can't always express in

their everyday world. They know they are in a place where they don't have to explain and can say anything on their minds.

Everyone at the seminar understands how they feel and why they are there—everyone there has loved and lost someone who proudly served. We know that we are entering into a weekend full of fun, hugs, sadness, memories, support, experiences, connection, and most importantly, a love that can fill us until the next TAPS event.

I started bringing yoga to TAPS in 2010. It's funny thinking back on those days—it always tends to hit me in ways I don't expect. I felt so many emotions as I offered fellow survivors a glimpse of something that I knew had brought me such healing, self-understanding, and growth in my grief journey. I always hope to spark that feeling in someone else. I have done yoga since I was 15 years old, so, for me, teaching fellow survivors has tied my two worlds together.

YOGA HELPS ME STAY BALANCED

I started making more time for yoga after my husband was injured. It provided me with “me time,” which helped me stay balanced throughout caregiving, having a toddler, pregnancy, having a baby, and our continued military service—all of it.

Indirectly, yoga even brought Wesley and me closer together. We would debate over whether it was a real workout or had any real benefits. I would show off new yoga poses that I learned or accomplished in a full-on, “look what I can do” style. He definitely appreciated watching anything like that! Occasionally, I even was able to get him to try a few basic postures to help him stretch out.

When Wesley died, yoga was my survival raft. It gave me a space to cry, release, and find myself again, providing me with that extra boost of strength to get through everything.



When I felt less than, yoga provided me with self-forgiveness.

Now, I can help others discover that release for themselves. Every time I teach someone new to yoga, which happens a lot at TAPS, especially with military members involved— I have a little giggle in my head over the little debates my husband and I would always have. I smile about how I get to use yoga to help people going through things he and I endured, sharing how yoga can be more than just glorified stretching!

A HEALING FAMILY ACTIVITY

Yoga with family is always a special experience full of fun and laughter. I have done yoga with my children since they were babies, and now that they've grown older, we go to family yoga classes together. As I help them figure out poses or as they decide to climb or sit on me, yoga has connected us. One Memorial Day Weekend, I taught a morning family yoga class, and even to a normal yoga flow, children bring a sense of playfulness. Wes and I helped students do handstands against the walls.

When a family is grieving, it can be hard to have such light moments. That's the beautiful thing yoga can bring— a place to let the walls down, be vulnerable, let go of the outside world, and be with the moment. And teaching yoga at a TAPS event compounds those feelings with double the safe space, allowing the potential for double the release.

Yoga has allowed me to reach so many different people throughout the years.



At TAPS Seminars, I have taught gentle yoga, yoga for trauma, and yoga and mind-body nutrition workshops for adults, children, and families. When asked if I were willing to offer family yoga classes at TAPS Seminars, I was so excited! Yoga is a healing activity that they can continue together at home. So many times, I've seen yoga help families develop a deeper understanding of who their children are.

YOGA TEACHES TRUST

Trust is one of the biggest lessons I've learned from teaching survivors. I trust what needs to be said or done and that it will resonate with someone. I have learned to make my yoga classes personal. If I am going through something, there is a very good chance that someone else has, is, or will relate somehow. Using those experiences to talk about how yoga helped me has allowed more space for my own growth. I find that when I share myself, the class becomes a deeper experience for everyone.

It also helps others to open up more as I trust them with my stories. Teaching from the heart, from that personal place, has taught me to understand them and myself better. I am a better observer of people. I can be flexible as needed, as yoga is always trying to teach us to go with the

flow and be in the moment. I find more compassion and love in everyone's situation, including my own.

INSPIRING SELF-GRATITUDE

To watch people push out of their comfort zone, try new things, struggle and fall, try again, support each other, cry, and find a moment of relaxation and release— all within a single class— is a healing energy that's indescribable. To have military survivors return year after year to my classes for that experience is so special. They fill me in on their at-home yoga practices and how my classes have changed and inspired them. In every session, I can see how people shift in headspaces from beginning to end.

I teach that yoga doesn't have to be scary, offering foundations so that my students feel comfortable taking classes at home. I show that yoga can be for anybody— flexible or not. They learn to appreciate their bodies again, discover their strength, and find gratitude in the fact that they still have their bodies bringing them through every day. Hopefully, they find at least a moment to connect with their minds, acknowledge their bodies, and have a moment of peace.

TAPS YOGA LIFTS HEARTS

The yoga and wellness programs at TAPS National Seminars have grown so much since those few classes I taught ten years ago. I love the discussion they create and the healing they allow. I am regularly overwhelmed with what being at TAPS Seminars over Memorial Day Weekends has done for my healing, for the burden it lifts from my heart in sharing space with other survivors. I enjoy seeing how yoga helps create the people my children are growing into— the confidence they have and the compassion they show to others. TAPS was never a place I thought I'd find myself, but I couldn't imagine our lives any other way. We are ever grateful for all the support TAPS provides!

Healing Your Grieving Heart

Embrace Self-Care this Holiday Season

Bonnie Carroll ★ TAPS President and Founder

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. ★ TAPS Advisory Board



LET GO OF DESTRUCTIVE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT GRIEF AND MOURNING

Most of us have internalized a number of our society's harmful misconceptions about grief and mourning.

Here are some to let go of:

- ★ I need to be strong and carry on.
- ★ Tears are a sign of weakness.
- ★ I need to get over my grief.
- ★ Death is something we don't talk about.
- ★ The more traumatic the death, the more I should try to put it behind me quickly and efficiently.
- ★ Other people need me so I need to "hurry up" and get back to my "normal" self.

Sometimes these misconceptions will cause you to feel guilty about or ashamed of your true thoughts and feelings.

Your grief is your grief. It's normal and necessary. Allow it to be what it is.

BE AWARE THAT YOUR GRIEF AFFECTS YOUR BODY, MIND, HEART, SOCIAL SELF, AND SPIRIT

Grief is physically demanding. This is especially true with traumatic grief. Your body responds to the stress of the encounter, and the immune system can weaken. You may be more susceptible to illness and physical discomforts. You may also feel lethargic, weak, or extremely fatigued.

You may not be sleeping well and you may have little appetite (or you may be overeating). Your stomach may hurt. Your chest may ache.

Cognitively, you may have trouble thinking clearly. Your thoughts may seem disorganized, and you might be finding it hard to concentrate or complete even the simplest task.

Likewise, the emotional toll of grief is complex and painful. You may feel many different feelings, and those feelings can shift and blur over time.

This death has probably also caused social discomfort. Because they don't know what to say or do, some friends and family members may withdraw from you, leaving you isolated and unsupported.

You may ask yourself, "Why go on living?" "Will my life have meaning now?" "Where is God in this?" Spiritual questions such as these are natural and necessary but also draining.

Basically, your grief will affect every aspect of your life. Don't be alarmed. Trust that if you do your grief work and meet your needs of mourning, you will find peace and comfort again.

TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF

Good self-care is nurturing and necessary for mourners, yet it's something many of us completely overlook.

Try very hard to eat well and get adequate rest. Lay your body down two or three times a day



YOU ARE LOVED

for 20 to 30 minutes, even if you don't sleep. We know— you probably don't care very much about eating well right now, and you may be sleeping poorly. But taking care of yourself is truly one way to fuel healing and begin to embrace life again.

Listen to what your body tells you. "Get some rest," it says. "But I don't have time," you reply. "I have things to do." "OK, then, I'll get sick so you HAVE to rest," your body says. And it will get sick if that's what it takes to get its needs met.

Drink at least five to six glasses of water each day. Dehydration can compound feelings of fatigue and disorientation.

Exercise not only provides you with more energy, it can give you focused thinking time. Take a 20-minute walk every day. Or, if that seems too much, a five-minute walk. But don't over-exercise, because your body needs extra rest as well.

Now more than ever, you need to allow time for you.

BREATHE

When the demands of your grief—not to mention the demands of your daily life—feel overwhelming, stop what you're doing for a few minutes and just breathe.

If you can, give yourself five full minutes to concentrate on your breathing. Breathe from your diaphragm: push your belly out as you breathe in and pull your belly in as you breathe out. Imagine that you're inhaling the spiritual energy you need to heal and that you're exhaling your sadness and bad feelings.

Breathing opens you up. Grief may have closed you down. The power of breath helps to fill your empty spaces. The old wisdom of "count to ten" is all about taking a deep breath to open up space for something else to happen.

Meditate if meditation helps center you. Find someplace quiet, be still, close your eyes, and focus on breathing in and out. Relax your muscles. Listen to your own heartbeat. When you notice yourself thinking about something other than your breathing, gently let the thought go and bring your attention back to your breath.

Consciously breathe in and out; you can slow the world down and touch the edges of your true self.

KNOW THAT YOU ARE LOVED

As Jane Howard wisely observed, "Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you

are, you need one." Yes, love from family, friends, and community gives life meaning and purpose. Look around for expressions of care and concern. These are people who love you and want to be an important part of your support system.

Some of those who love you may not know how to reach out to you, but they still care about you. Reflect on those people and the ways in which your life matters to them. Open your heart and have gratitude for those who love you.

Feeling connected to people around you can be a great source of you and a cause for celebration. When you reach out to others, and they to you, you remember you are loved even during days of darkness and grief.

In contrast, if you lose this connection, you suffer alone and in isolation. Feeling pessimistic, you may retreat even more. You begin to sever your relationships and make your world smaller. Over-isolation anchors your loss and sadness in place.

You are connected to your family, friends, and community in a circle, with no end and no beginning. When you allow yourself to be a part of that circle, you find your place. You realize you belong and are a vital part of a bigger whole.

Support the *Mission*, Honor the *Legacy*

REMEMBERING OUR NATION'S FALLEN HEROES AT THE TAPS NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS



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Hero Tile Wall

The TAPS National Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia is America's home for all those grieving the death of a military loved one. Hero, legacies live, and love lives on. We honor all of our military loved ones, support the TAPS mission, and commemorate lives lived in selfless service with our Hero Wall.

We invite all military survivors to honor the legacies of their fallen heroes by purchasing a tribute tile on our Hero Wall, including pictures of loved ones and personalized inscriptions. They will be proudly and permanently displayed by the entry of the TAPS National Headquarters.



Remembrance: \$250
Remember your loved one with this 4" x 5" tile.



Tribute: \$500
Create a tribute to your loved one with 8" x 5" tile.



Salute: \$1,000
Salute your loved one with this 8" x 10" tile.



Honor: \$2,500
Honor your loved one with this 16" x 10" tile.

GRATEFUL NATION MEMORIAL HERO WALL

As surviving families, we are connected by a common thread. We are part of a larger American legacy of grief and loss. The Grateful Nation Memorial Hero Wall is an online home where surviving military families everywhere can honor and share stories about their loved one, at no cost to survivors. You can share the legacy of your fallen hero by adding your loved one to the virtual Grateful Nation Memorial Hero Wall with our supporters on social media.



Grateful Nation Memorial

Three Ways to Boost Memories of Loved Ones This Holiday Season

Allison Gilbert ★ TAPS Advisory Board

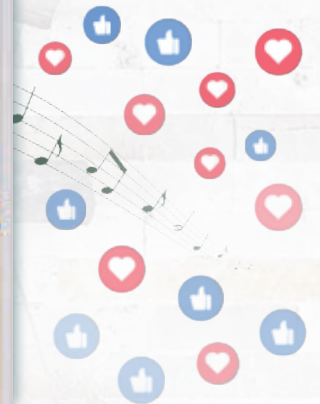
We know holidays can be challenging for individuals who've lost loved ones, but they also offer opportunities for keeping memories alive. Below are three of my favorite ways to honor and celebrate the family and friends we never want to forget.

Use Social Media

If you can't be with your family for the holidays, share memories of your loved one on social media. I used this strategy on the 20th anniversary of my mother's death. First, I changed my profile photo to a picture of my mother and me. The swap was a visual cue something different was happening, and my Facebook friends should (hopefully!) pay attention. Next, I wrote a brief status update about the milestone, tagged people who knew her best, and encouraged everyone to post a favorite recollection. The result? A virtual celebration of her life.

Make Memory Magnets

If you're gathering in person, consider doing an activity together—creating memory magnets. Each person needs a photo of their loved one. Other supplies include epoxy bubble stickers, sheets of magnetic backing (both the bubble stickers and magnetic sheets are widely available at craft stores), and scissors. First, affix the epoxy stickers (sticky-side down) to the top of your picture, giving it a glass-like finish. Next, cut a magnetic strip to size and shape your sticker and place it on the back. Done! Encourage family members to take these sentimental favors home to use on their refrigerators and washing machines.



Create Poignant Playlists

Use memories to inspire meaningful holiday playlists. Before my uncle died, he dictated a list of his favorite pieces of music. The playlist I made with his favorite songs brings back wonderful memories. What music did your loved one enjoy most? Make a playlist, and then consider sharing it. A commemorative playlist happens to make an especially thoughtful holiday gift.

Want more ideas?

I reveal 85 practical and creative opportunities in my book, *Passed and Present: Keeping Memories of Loved Ones Alive*. Want to share your creative strategies with me?

I'd love to know about them! Connect with me on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter by searching @agilbertwriter.

My Memory Scarf

REMEMBERING ALL OF THE FIRST DAYS

Lydia Joy Burgdorf

Surviving Mother of U.S. Marine Corps Lance Corporal
Carl Thomas Burgdorf

At my son Carl's visitation, my friend Robin handed me a book and said, "Just a little something I've had set aside for you." I tucked it in my bag and walked over to greet a new arrival. After the internment service and before another appointment, I opened her gift the next day. Titled "Knit the Sky," the book was designed to encourage creativity. Its first project suggestion was to capture the colors of the sky for a full year in a scarf. This idea resonated so much that I quickly took a picture of the sky with my phone.

KNITTING THE SKY FOR A FULL YEAR

The next day, I brought the book to my local yarn store after meeting with my Casualty Assistance Calls Officer to sign more paperwork. I shared the project idea with the store owner, explaining "I'm going to knit the sky for a full year and remember all of the days." We talked about adding beads for rainy or snowy days and charms for special days. And so, I left with six cakes of yarn: dark grey, light grey, off white, white with flashes of other colors, light blue, and sky blue. I went home, cast on 40 stitches, and worked two rows for the first day, internment day, and the current day.

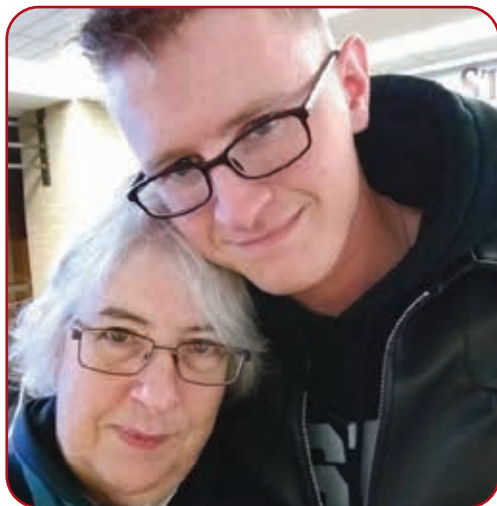
The knitting needles felt so right in my hands, but I couldn't go any further. Although I wanted to continue, I had to wait for sunrise, noon, and evening to know what color yarn to use— to know what color the sky would be. I already picked up beads for rainy days

and different beads for snowy days at the store, so I ordered a bag of charms online for the holidays and special days that I didn't want to celebrate. When the charms came, I sorted them into two piles: one for the scarf and one for other projects.

PAYING ATTENTION TO THE COLOR OF THE SKY EVERY DAY

Days turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Somedays, I was too tired to knit, so I wrote down the color of the sky in my journal. I had a code that would tell me which colors to use for that day. Light blue and speckled was for days with clouds that ran across the sky. Dark blue, held double was for days with no clouds, just a bright sun. If it were rainy, I used two shades of grey and added beads in different blue shades. I would put beads at the beginning of the row if it rained in the morning and at the end if it rained at night. I used fewer beads for rain showers than for downpours. Crystal beads were for snow, spread apart for flurries, and packed together for winter storms. One morning while driving to work, I realized that I had forgotten about fog, so I added small, green-grey beads on the right-hand side.

I added my first charm for Halloween—skull and crossbones. I remember adding a ring of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue beads to mark late-season thunderstorms that left beautiful rainbows in the sky. Later, I added music



notes for Carl's birthday, a pumpkin for Thanksgiving, a tree of life for my birthday, and a package for Christmas. I included a frog for leap day on February 29 and a butterfly for Easter.

And then suddenly, I was working from home, not driving to work, not seeing the same expanse of sky. But every day, I looked out my balcony door and wrote down the color of the sky. It didn't matter if I picked up knitting needles that day or missed a day or two; I wrote down the color of the sky every day.

On August 10, just before nine o'clock in the morning, a sudden wind blew from



the northwest. The trees bent almost to the ground from the force of the winds. And then, it was quiet, still because the storm, the derecho, had moved east. I knew that I had to add this weather event to my scarf, but I was unsure how to represent 60 mile per hour winds. Finally, after a few days of deliberation, I added another thread to my scarf just for that day, just for those two rows: a thread in a different shade of blue strung with dark iridescent beads. I deliberately



left long loops of thread between each stitch on the second row, with a bead on each loop. I hoped that the weight of the beads would help the loops sway back and forth to resemble the trees swaying in the wind.

HONORING SPECIAL SEPTEMBER DAYS

And then, it was September. I added a charm in the shape of a wing to mark Carl's angel day, an airplane to mark the day he came home for the last time, a star for the next day, and a heart for the day of visitation. The final two rows brought tears as I worked them because it had been a full year since the burial— I had finished the scarf.



A FEW THOUGHTS ON WHY THIS HELPED MY GRIEF JOURNEY

This project forced me to pay attention to something outside of my grief. Every day, I had to look or go outside and figure out what color the sky was to know how to combine the six yarn colors to represent the sky. I had to pay attention to rain, snow, and fog to include that in my project. I got to add the charms for all of the hard days, the first birthdays, the first holidays, and the first anniversary of his death. I had to decide how many beads to add or where to place them on rows. I could not work ahead— I had to wait for the next day to add the next pair of rows. I could allow myself to fall behind as long as I wrote down the color, but I couldn't jump ahead.

THE HEALING COMES FROM MAKING THE SCARF, FROM DOING THE WORK

This project was tactile, as I used my hands and felt the yarn slip through my fingers. I had to carefully guide the beads onto a small crochet hook to add them where needed. I had to loop the thread through the charms to make sure they were securely attached. After I had finished the last stitch, I had to weave in the ends and wash and block the scarf to finish it.

My scarf is an intensely personal project. I had difficulty expressing why I could not make one for someone who asked, and I just said no. The healing isn't in the scarf; the healing comes from making the scarf, from doing the work. Yes, when I wear it, I feel the warmth of the wool against my skin and its weight comforting. It also helps me tell the story of the year that didn't feel right.

The year that I survived because the yarn slipped through my fingers and around my needles; forty stitches back and forth. Forty stitches to mark each day that I had not quit or given up.

CHOOSING YOUR OWN PROJECT

Your project doesn't have to be a scarf. It could be a quilt, an afghan, or a sampler. It doesn't have to track the color of the sky either; it could track the high or low temperature. It can also be a way to track your mood or stress. But, you have to make the commitment to the project, tracking your chosen idea daily.

If you want to remember the year your person died, but it's been a while, then think about using the daily temperature. You can get records of the daily temperature for your city from the National Weather Service or a local newspaper.



TAPS.ORG



For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**TAPS NATIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR
HELPLINE**
202-588-TAPS (8277)

Grief knows no boundaries. Challenging moments, when survivors may need extra support, can come at any -time. The TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline is answered live— 24/7/365— with gentle care for all those grieving the loss of a military loved one. Our loving network of peer professionals ensures that each Helpline caller has open access to all that TAPS provides. Whether a survivor needs emotional support, connection to resources or programs, or to share what’s in their hearts– we always have time, we always answer, and we always care.

**PEER-BASED
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

Survivors helping survivors is the foundation of TAPS. We bring survivors together to find strength and hope through our TAPS Peer Mentor network. Survivors who are at least 18 months out from their loss volunteer their time and receive training to become Peer Mentors, who are paired with newly bereaved survivors to help them navigate the aftermath of loss. This program provides comfort to survivors and lets them know that they are not alone. Peer Mentors also lend support at TAPS Events throughout the year.

**CASEWORK
ASSISTANCE**

On top of the exhaustion of grief, survivors often become overwhelmed by the complexity of managing benefits, finances, paperwork, and other unexpected issues. TAPS Casework assist surviving military families during these difficult times. Our casework team strivaeas diligently to align with partners and third-party resources address the individual needs of each family, such as pro-bono legal assistance, emergency financial resources, information on state and federal benefits, and private social services support. Survivors receive compassionate and responsive support to guide them towards the path of long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

**EDUCATION
SUPPORT SERVICES**

Along the grief journey, experiencing a shift in occupational desires or goals is common for military survivors. If survivors wish to pursue post-secondary education, TAPS Education Services empowers survivors to enter the next phase in their lives. We serve as a guide to scholarship information and benefits resources. Our education support coordinators work with survivors to explain benefits, align available resources and educational goals, and determine the best options for financial assistance.

**COMMUNITY-BASED
GRIEF SUPPORT**

Military survivors may benefit from individual grief counseling. Skilled therapists can help those grieving work through difficult questions, changes in relationships, and secondary losses. The right counselor can guide survivors to discover their strengths and develop coping skills that work for them. With the support of our network of strong community partners, TAPS connects survivors to free, unlimited grief counseling, trauma resources, and local support groups. We perform careful research and compiles resources with love and care to locate support for survivors near their homes.

SURVIVOR CARE TEAM

At the heart of our survivor support, the TAPS Survivor Care Team compassionately connects survivors with all the resources that TAPS offers. Members of our Survivor Care Team are surviving military family members who have been through extensive professional training on emotional, peer-based support, traumatic death, and grief. They are proud to serve as advocates, attentive listeners, and companions for their fellow survivors. Through personalized support, our peer professionals create safe spaces where survivors feel heard and empowered to develop their long-term support systems.

SUICIDE LOSS SUPPORT

TAPS has supported thousands of military suicide loss by offering them hope, healing, and renewed opportunities for growth. We understand that suicide grief is different—death by suicide can leave behind a wake of powerful, complicated emotions and questions. Our special programs and resources provide compassionate support for all suicide loss survivors and safe spaces to honor and grieve their loved ones. Our unique approach helps stabilize survivors and surviving families—guiding survivors towards a path of “healthy grieving” and growth.

ILLNESS LOSS SUPPORT

TAPS is a leader in ensuring that surviving military families whose loved ones died from illnesses are recognized, cared for, and aware of all benefits they are eligible for. We compile relevant legislation, medical studies, expert testimony, literature, and reports to create reference manuals that serve as the foundation of future advocacy work. We critically raise awareness about the effects of toxic exposure, help families navigate the benefits process following a military loss, and provide connections for survivors who have lost their loved ones after having been their caregivers.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The pain of loss ushers in hard questions: Why are we here? What is our purpose? TAPS Womens' Empowerment helps survivors incorporate concepts of identity and spirituality into transformative goal-setting. We provide survivors with tools to inspire confidence that help them move into the lives they've imagined. Through in-person and virtual events, we bring together a vibrant, compassionate community and supportive sisterhood of surviving women— who treasure opportunities to be each other's teachers, confidantes, cheerleaders, and friends.

YOUTH PROGRAMS

Though their lives are marked by grief, young TAPS survivors know that their lives will also be marked by camaraderie, mentorship, emotional maturity, adventure, and fun. Led by experts in the fields of child development, mental health, and education, TAPS Youth Programs provides safe spaces for military children to explore grief and embrace healing, such as Good Grief Camps, summer campouts, teen adventures, and family retreats.

YOUNG ADULT PROGRAMS

Designed for surviving military children and siblings between ages 18-25, the TAPS Young Adult Program helps children graduating from the TAPS Good Grief Camp transition into a more mature program. Our dynamic curriculum focuses on five pillars of growth: personal development, financial stability, communication, career development, and service to others. We provide young adult survivors with tools to help them create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth.

TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing™ is a nation and worldwide leader in training and education for bereavement professionals, bereaved individuals, grieving families, and civilian families. Useful information on grief and bereavement support is available to all through webinars, webcasts, and other events. The Institute offers programs focused on understanding suicide; understanding children's grief; practical tips for coping with grief; wellness workshops; and creative ways to keep the memories of lost loved ones alive. For professionals, the Institute hosts academic programs instructed by field experts. A wide range of health and social service professional boards offer continuing education credits for these programs.

PUBLICATIONS

TAPS has created several proprietary publications to serve the survivor community, offering both valuable inspiration and information. In collaboration with subject matter experts, we have designed a series of pocket-size guides— available at no cost to survivors and readily accessible online— that provide information on available resources and services for grief and bereavement support. Our other publications include the book *Healing Your Grieving Heart after a Military Death: 100 Practical Ideas for Families and Friends* by Bonnie Carroll and Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D.; the children's book *Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope*; and the TAPS Magazine.

Navigating Conversations around Grief and the Holidays

Rachel Kodanaz ✨ TAPS Advisory Board



PHOTOS: PEXELS.COM/LAURA JAMES; TAPS ARCHIVES



Most conversations between two or more people are casual and engaged to exchange ideas, thoughts, or emotions. In most cases, discussions are straightforward and timely—based on current events, shared experiences, or future planning. However, navigating, and often tiptoeing, around conversations during the holiday season is essential to remain conscientious of those grieving the loss of a loved one and being sensitive to their needs.

Caring Intentions of Family and Friends

Embracing and celebrating the holiday season following a loss can be a bit overwhelming. While you may want to engage in some planned activities, the people around you may push to engage you in festivities more than you would like. Their actions are from a place of caring, with the ultimate desire to be inclusive. Although, at times, their eagerness to help may cause them to stumble in conversation, try to embrace their enthusiasm. There is a natural tendency to shy away from activity or interaction during the holidays as a grieving individual. That's because these times magnify the emptiness and sadness of loss, resulting in loneliness and isolation. Regardless of the reason, your friends and family members struggle to interact and often make inappropriate comments or tend to minimize your loss in hopes of easing the pain.

Celebrate the Holidays and Honor Your Grief

When navigating conversations around grief and the holidays, it's not about what others say but how you react to what others say. Of course, people mean well, especially your family and friends, but

how you interpret their comments might create an emotional reaction.

The holiday season is a time of celebration, family gatherings, sharing, and spending time with others. Those grieving often have to guide a conversation to balance the joy of being with others with the sadness of a loss. By directing the conversation, you can be true to your own needs rather than those of the people around you. Be sure to prepare yourself for emotional setbacks—for becoming defensive with those you feel are less sensitive to your situation. Find the balance of old and new by sticking to what works best for you. Be inclusive by sharing stories of your loved ones, preparing their favorite foods, and creating new memories.

Protect Yourself and Your Feelings

Most importantly, be sure to navigate the conversations by allowing yourself to feel your emotions; and try not to cover up or stifle how you feel to please others, whether in person or at virtual engagements. Be sure to define what is best for you by planning and communicating your plans well in advance. Focus on what you have control over rather than being hurt or emotionally displaced when caught off guard. Honor the memories of your loved ones by including them in festivities in any manner you feel comfortable. Set boundaries and communicate with your family how much time you want to be together and the details of gatherings. Be sure to prepare yourself for a range of emotions—the most straightforward comments can set off an array of sadness, guilt, loneliness, and resentment.

Always remember, the most important person is YOU, so take care of yourself first. Enjoy the holiday season!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



rachelkodanaz.com

Rachel Kodanaz is a heart-minded professional specializing in current and relevant approaches to support individuals and workplaces following a loss or trauma. A TAPS Advisory Board Member, Rachel is also a seasoned keynote speaker and best-selling author.

Visit Rachel's website to find her published books, offering a wealth of knowledge, inspiration, and practical advice for those who have lost a loved one or are supporting someone who has lost a loved one.



*TAPS Webinar Hosted
by Rachel Kodanaz*

Watch Rachel's webinar, Navigating Conversations around Grief and the Holidays, hosted by the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® to learn strategies and share ideas about how to find meaningful ways to celebrate the holidays and honor your grief while still protecting yourself and your feelings.

NAVIGATING THE

HOLIDAYS AS A FAMILY



The holidays can be challenging times when we are grieving the death of a family member. All the lights, bright colors, and celebratory spirit can stand in stark contrast to the grief we may be feeling. Traditions bringing much meaning to our lives in the past may now serve as reminders of our person's absence. Simply put, grieving during the holidays is not easy. As challenging as this season can be, it is also a magical time for children filled with happy anticipation, meaningful experiences, and memory-making that they will carry with them for a lifetime. During this time, how do we navigate our grief while also supporting our children's need to experience all that the holidays can be for them?

PLAN AND PRIORITIZE

It can be helpful for us to plan how we will celebrate the holidays with our children. We do not have to do all the things we have done in the past, particularly those that may now be more difficult for us

than others. Yet, we need to prioritize some traditions, new or old, that we can participate in together with our children. Children thrive when their environment is predictable. Holiday celebrations and traditions that happen from year to year provide a sense of predictability along with meaningful moments they will cherish. These traditions can also offer a sense of normalcy amid all the difficulties they may be experiencing in their grief.

ACKNOWLEDGE AND ASK

Participating in holiday traditions does not mean that we have to mask our feelings of grief. Children are observant, grieving themselves, and aware that grief makes the holidays different. It is okay to share with your children that this time of year is difficult for you and acknowledge that it also may be difficult for them. Acknowledging your grief and your children's grief can open lines of communication, creating opportunities for meaningful family connections. You

can also ask your children what parts of the holidays they are looking forward to, what their grief is like, and what things worry them. In this way, your family can make a plan together about how to best experience the holidays.

DO SOMETHING NEW

You may also create new traditions or do something different during the holidays. Grief brings about change to our lives. Sometimes long-held traditions lose their luster, and we need to let them go and, instead, do something new. Some have found ways to incorporate the memories of those who have died by lighting candles and purchasing special ornaments. Others have shared that they have created new volunteering traditions during the holiday season or done acts of kindness in memory and honor of their person who died. Whatever you choose to do, having an opportunity to be together as a family will have a lasting, positive impact on your children well into adulthood.

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/JOLGA LEBEDEVA & VICUSCHKA & MIKYSO; TAPS ARCHIVES



FAMILY HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

THE GIFT OF GIVING

This activity offers a way for your family to connect and remember your loved one.

SUPPLIES

- ★ Crayons
- ★ Markers
- ★ Pens
- ★ Notecards
- ★ Envelopes

DIRECTIONS

Have each family member think of a favorite memory of your loved one and an

act of service they can do for other family members, people in the community, or local charities. On notecards, have each person draw a picture and write their special memory and act of service. Before placing them in envelopes, each person may decorate theirs in any way they like.

As a family, find a time to exchange your notecards as gifts in memory of your special person. Each family member should receive another person's notecard, not their



own. Have each person share the notecard they received with your family. The person who created each notecard may share more about their special memory and why they chose their act of service.

Either individually or as a family, make a plan to do the act of service in each card in honor of your loved one's memory.



EVENING OF FAVORITES

This activity offers a way for you to remember your loved one while connecting as a family throughout the holiday season.

SUPPLIES

- ★ Pens
- ★ Paper

DIRECTIONS

Together as a family, select dates throughout the holiday season to dedicate evenings for each family member when you will do some of their favorite things. Individuals can look forward to their special nights when everyone will do what they like most.

What's Your Favorite...

- ★ Food
- ★ Movie
- ★ Family
- ★ Activity
- ★ Game
- ★ Color



As a family, talk about your loved one's favorite things. Make a list of these things on a piece of paper.

Select dates throughout the holiday season when you can dedicate special evenings for each family member to do some of their favorite things together as a family. Individuals can look forward to their special evenings when everyone will do what they like most.

Choose evenings when the family will do some of your loved one's favorite things. You may also like to take the opportunity to share your favorite memories of your loved one on those special nights.



Savoring Precious Memories

Favorite Foods – Warm Hearts

Rachel Eckels

Surviving Mother of U.S. Navy Petty Officer Second Class Timothy Eckels, Jr.

The holidays tend to be a time when beautiful food memories resurface, reminding us of cherished times with family, friends, and loved ones. The beauty of special foods is that they connect us to those we have lost, forever residing in our hearts. This season, we can honor our loved ones by preparing their favorite foods that offer us comfort and joy.

For the Holiday season, my grandmother would bake several batches of cookies. One cookie recipe that my son Timothy particularly loved was her gingersnaps, or what he would call “gingerbread cookies.” We used this recipe to create our gingersnaps and our gingerbread girls and boys, which Timothy and his sisters would love to decorate. As Timothy and his sisters grew older,

I decided to add just a little boldness to this recipe by upgrading it.

My family loves adding just a hint of heat to a dish, so I incorporated a hint of cayenne and fresh ginger for a more flavorful gingersnap, and Timothy LOVED them! During his first year at sea, I sent Timothy an assortment of his favorite cookies for the

holiday season, and he was so thrilled to have the remixed gingersnaps in the box. It brought him so much comfort and a sense of home.

I’m sharing our favorite gingersnap recipe this holiday season with the hope that it will bring you as much comfort as it did for Timothy and me.



TIMMY'S GINGERSNAPS REMIX



Ingredients | (80 cookies)

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 12 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1 pinch cayenne pepper
- 1 1/4 cups packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup molasses
- 2 tablespoons finely grated fresh ginger
- 1 large egg plus 1 large yolk
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar

Cooking Steps

1. Preheat the oven to 300 degrees. Adjust two oven racks to upper-middle and lower-middle positions.
2. Whisk flour, baking soda, and salt together in a bowl; set aside.
3. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium/low and continue letting it cook, swirling butter frequently until butter is just beginning to brown (about 2-4 minutes). Transfer browned butter to a large bowl and whisk in ground ginger, cinnamon, cloves, pepper, and cayenne pepper. Let it cool slightly (about 2 minutes).
4. Whisk brown sugar, molasses, and fresh ginger into the butter mixture until combined. Whisk in egg and yolk until combined. Stir in flour mixture until just combined. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap and refrigerate dough until firm (about 1 hour).
5. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Put granulated sugar in a shallow bowl. Divide dough into two balls and work with one at a time. Cover and place the second dough into the refrigerator until you are ready to use it. Now using heaping teaspoon portions, roll dough into 1-inch balls and roll balls in sugar to coat. Space dough balls evenly on prepared sheets.
6. Place cookie sheet on the upper-middle rack in the heated oven and bake for 15 minutes. Transfer partially baked cookies to the lower-middle rack, rotating the cookie sheet. Bake for an additional 15 to 17 minutes longer until the cookies have darker outer edges.
7. Using the parchment paper, slide the baked cookies onto a wire cooling rack. Cool completely before serving, and enjoy!



Make a resolution to

Join Your TAPS Family IN 2022

SURVIVOR RETREATS AND EXPERIENCES

2022

FEBRUARY 6–11

Women's Empowerment Retreat
Sedona, Arizona

SEPTEMBER 5–9

Men's West Creek Ranch Retreat
Emigrant, Montana

MARCH 2–6

Iditarod Survivor Experience
Anchorage, Alaska

SEPTEMBER 19–23

Women's Empowerment Summit
and Young Adults Retreat
Toledo, Ohio

MAY 4–9

Blue Ridge Mountains
Women's Empowerment Retreat
Boone, North Carolina

OCTOBER 30–

NOVEMBER 4

Women's Empowerment Retreat
Sedona, Arizona

JUNE 13–17

Self-funded TAPS 4-Night Bahamas
and Perfect Day at CocoCay Cruise
Orlando, Florida



PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES

» For more information, visit taps.org/events

MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINARS AND GOOD GRIEF CAMPS

JANUARY 28–30

Northeastern Regional Military
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
Hershey, Pennsylvania

MAY 27–30

28th Annual National Military
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
Arlington, Virginia

AUGUST 26–28

Southern Regional Military
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
San Antonio, Texas

FEBRUARY 25–27

Southeast Regional Military
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
Jacksonville, Florida

JULY 8–10

Mountain Regional
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
Denver, Colorado

OCTOBER 6–9

14th Annual National Military Suicide
Seminar and Good Grief Camp
Dallas, Texas

NOVEMBER 18–20

Western Regional Military
Survivor Seminar and
Good Grief Camp
Los Angeles, California



REMEMBER THE LOVE, CELEBRATE THE LIFE, SHARE THE JOURNEY

Connect ☆ *Reflect* ☆ *Inspire*

28TH ANNUAL TAPS NATIONAL MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP

Memorial Day Weekend ☆ May 27-30, 2022 ☆ Arlington, Virginia

Grief is both universal and individual. While our journeys are unique, they are meant to be shared among others who understand. At TAPS, no matter where you are in your grief journey, support and connection await you. Our TAPS family understands, and we invite you to join us as we honor and remember our military loved ones, empowering each other to become the living legacies of their service and sacrifice.

Each Memorial Day, our country remembers those who have served and died. As our nation reflects on the costs of freedom, we come together to tell the stories of patriots.

We name our heroes, celebrate their lives, and decide again to live bigger and better on their behalf.

The National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp connects surviving loved ones with professionals who can provide support and assistance.

Join us for a weekend of connection, reflection, and inspiration at the 28th National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief Camp. Together, we will create a sacred space where we will cherish the lives of our military loved ones, learn from each other, and share the reverence of losses that bind us all.

Knowing the relief of being understood, we will look to each other with empathy and open hearts. Our programing will encourage meaningful connections, cultivate strength for exploring emotions and resources, and lift your spirits. As we look to our heroes for inspiration, we will use what we know about love and loss throughout the weekend to contemplate how we will approach the next part of our grief journeys.

Every evening as darkness falls, the stars transform a sky filled with darkness into twinkling pinpricks of light. Just as stars illuminate the night sky, our TAPS family brings light into the darkness of grief.





TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

Empower Yourself Through Education ☆ taps.org/institute | institute@taps.org

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing™ empowers the bereaved and enhances the expertise of professionals caring for the bereaved through grief, resilience, and wellness education. Through workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and more, the Institute trains professionals and helps both individuals and families thrive after the loss of a military loved one. Visit the Institute to access the Event Calendar, register for upcoming webinars, and watch recorded webinars!

JOIN OUR UPCOMING LIVE WEBINARS IN THE NEW YEAR!

COPING WITH DEATHS THAT ARE STIGMATIZED

January 19, 2021

Ken Doka, Ph.D., MDiv

Senior Vice President of Grief Programs,
Hospice Foundation of America (HFA),
TAPS Advisory Board Member

SIBLING LOSS

January 25, 2021

Heidi Horsley, Psy.D., LMSW, MS

Founder and Executive Director,
Open to Hope Foundation,
TAPS Advisory Board Member

GRIEF JOURNALING IN THE NEW YEAR

February 1, 2021

Heather Stang

Author, Speaker, TAPS Advisory Board Member

DENIED AND DELAYED: RITUAL INTERVENTION IN TIMES OF LOSS AND THE PANDEMIC

February 22, 2021

Thom Dennis, DMin, LCPC, CT

Bereavement Coordinator,
NorthShore University Health System,
Hospice Grief Counselor

WATCH WEBINARS ONLINE TODAY ON COPING WITH GRIEF DURING THE HOLIDAYS



NAVIGATING CONVERSATIONS AROUND GRIEF AND THE HOLIDAYS



NAVIGATING THE HOLIDAYS FOR THOSE GRIEVING A LOSS



SO MUCH HAS CHANGED: MANAGING SECONDARY LOSSES DURING THE HOLIDAYS



GRIEF IN THE HOLIDAYS: FINDING MEANING AND HOPE AS A FAMILY



NEW TRADITIONS AND TIPS FOR THE HOLIDAYS



taps.org/institute

SHOP WITH TAPS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

taps.org/shop

1.



2.



- 1. TAPS Soy Aromatherapy Candle in Travel Tin - \$14.99
- 2. TAPS Pom Beanie - \$19.99
- 3. TAPS Embroidered Logo Backpack - \$39.99
- 4. PopSocket Phone Grip and Stand - \$9.99
- 5. Red TAPS Logo Bistro Mug - \$9.99
- 6. Lapis Stretch Beaded Bracelet - \$34.99
- 7. TAPS Survivor Long Sleeve T-Shirt - \$14.99
- 8. Women's Relaxed Tone on Tone TAPS - \$19.99
- 9. Unisex Sport ¼ Zip Long Sleeve Tech Shirt - \$24.99

3.



4.



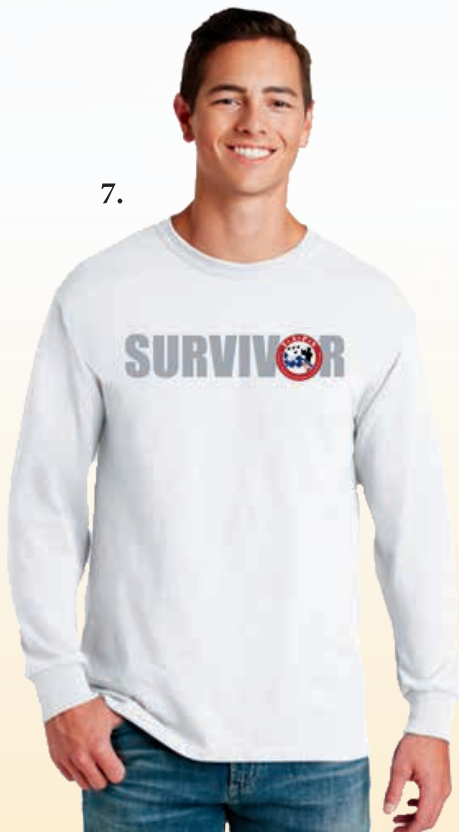
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8.



9.



*Wrap yourself in TAPS love
this holiday season*

11.



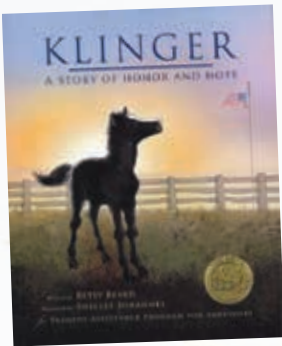
12.



10.



13.



14.



- 10. TAPS Branded Multi-functional Sport Neck Gaiter - **\$11.99**
- 11. Folded Flag Ornament 24k Gold - **\$19.99**
- 12. Wreath Ornament 24k Gold TAPS Logo - **\$19.99**
- 13. Klinger Children's Book - **\$14.99**
- 14. TAPS Store E-Gift Card - **Various Amounts**
- 15. Retro Style "I'm a Hugger!" Button - **\$3.99**
- 16. TAPS Logo Raglan Pullover Hoodie - **\$29.99**
- 17. Our Lives Will Be Our Tribute Unisex Tee - **\$24.99**

15.

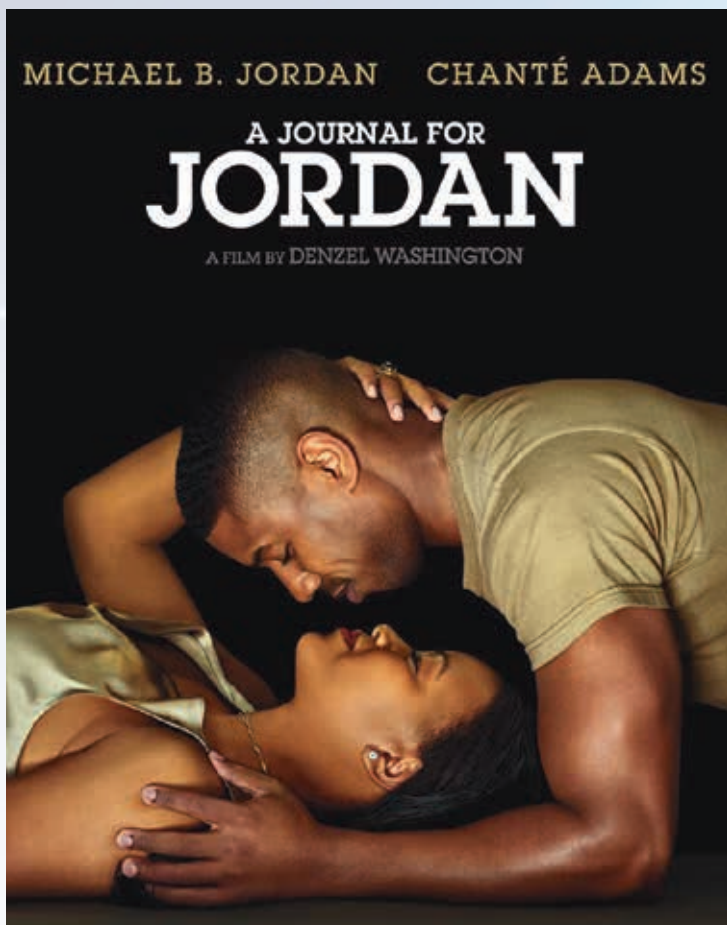


16.



17.





A JOURNAL FOR JORDAN

Exclusively in Movie Theaters this Christmas

Based on Dana Canedy's bestselling memoir, *A Journal for Jordan* follows the true story of U.S. Army First Sergeant Charles Monroe King, Canedy's fiancée. Before being killed in action while deployed in Baghdad, Iraq, King writes a journal for their son intended to tell him how to live a decent life despite growing up without a father. A TAPS National Military Survivor Seminar speaker, Canedy revisits King's enduring devotion to her and their son in this sweeping account of a once-in-a-lifetime love. Director Denzel Washington has worked with TAPS Board Member Mark "Ranger" Jones to bring this heartfelt story of a family fractured by war to theaters nation and worldwide, honoring all of our fallen heroes.



TAPS BOARD MEMBER MARK "RANGER" JONES, TAPS PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER BONNIE CARROLL, AND A JOURNAL FOR JORDAN DIRECTOR DENZEL WASHINGTON.



Are you looking for a way to support TAPS while shopping at home?

Select TAPS as your AmazonSmile charity of choice! When you shop at AmazonSmile, you'll find the exact same prices as Amazon.com, with a percentage of your purchases donated directly to TAPS— all at no cost to you. AmazonSmile is an amazing way to give back automatically just from shopping as usual!



"What's great about TAPS is its utter dedication to so many suffering souls, people like me who lost a beloved soldier in service to America. Equally remarkable are the families who turn to this caring organization to get through the most difficult of times. What struck me about the people I met during the Annual National Military Survivor Seminar was not the suffering but their strength. Sure, we shed some tears, but there was also a lot of laughter and hugging. And then there is the work TAPS does for the children of fallen soldiers through the Good Grief Camp. It is nothing less than extraordinary. I am so glad that my son Jordan and I are now part of the TAPS family. As I have often said, even in tragedy, there are blessings, and TAPS is proof of that."

~ Dana Canedy

Surviving Fiancée of U.S. Army First Sergeant Charles Monroe King ★ Featured TAPS Speaker



WAYS TO SUPPORT TAPS

DONATE

- ★ DONATE A MONETARY GIFT
- ★ DONATE YOUR VEHICLE FOR TAPS
- ★ PLANNED OR ESTATE GIVING

SPONSOR

- ★ HOST A FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER
- ★ HOST OR SUPPORT A FUNDRAISER
- ★ RACE WITH OR SUPPORT TEAM TAPS
- ★ SPONSOR THE HONOR GUARD GALA
- ★ SPONSOR REGIONAL OR NATIONAL SEMINARS

SHOP

- ★ AMAZONSMILE
- ★ AMAZON WISH LIST
- ★ SHOP FOR TAPS
- ★ TAPS STORE
- ★ TRIBUTE TILE AT NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

WORKPLACE GIVING

- ★ COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN
- ★ EMPLOYER MATCHED GIVING
- ★ GIFT CARD DRIVE
- ★ FILL THE BACKPACK

VOLUNTEER

- ★ VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME
- ★ MILITARY MENTORS
- ★ SOCIAL MEDIA
- ★ WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE
- ★ GRIEF PROFESSIONALS



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT SUPPORTING TAPS, EMAIL:

DEVELOPMENT@TAPS.ORG

TAPS ADVOCACY IN ACTION >>>



Your TAPS Policy Team is extremely busy advocating for our surviving families! We testified before Congress on five separate occasions and submitted statements for the record on important survivor issues. TAPS also advocates for our surviving families through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Federal Advisory Committee on Veterans' Families, Caregivers, and Survivors and Chairs the Survivor Subcommittee. We continue to brief leadership at the White House, VA, Department of Defense (DoD), and all government agencies impacting survivors.



GOLD STAR FAMILIES REMEMBRANCE WEEK

TAPS is working with Senators Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) and Raphael Warnock (D-GA) and Representative Dan Newhouse (R-WA-04) on the Gold Star Families Remembrance Week resolution (September 19-25), which recognizes the families of all military personnel who died while serving or from a service-connected injury or illness. TAPS has led efforts to ensure this inclusive resolution guarantees that no surviving military family is forgotten.

TOXIC EXPOSURE

As the leading voice for the families of those who died due to illnesses connected to toxic exposure, TAPS testifies in support of a myriad of toxic exposure bills. We appreciate the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate and House Committees on Veterans' Affairs for crafting landmark toxic exposure legislation, and we are working to ensure their swift passage.

Comprehensive and Overdue Support for Troops (COST) of War Act of 2021 (S.3003)

- ★ Ensures toxic exposure veterans get immediate, lifelong access to VA health care
- ★ Establishes consistent, transparent framework based on medical and scientific evidence to establish new presumptions of service connection between conditions and exposure

Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2021 (H.R.3967)

- ★ Provides healthcare for 3.5M veterans exposed to airborne hazards and burn pits
- ★ Streamlines VA's review process and require medical exams and opinions

MENTAL HEALTH

TAPS continues to work with the VA, DoD, and Congress to expand mental health services to all surviving families.

Expanding the Families of Veterans Access to Mental Health Services Act (H.R.5029)

- ★ Provides Vet Center counseling/mental health services to families of veteran suicide
- ★ Decreases risk for survivors of veteran suicide to include National Guard and Reserve

DEPENDENCY AND INDEMNITY COMPENSATION (DIC) INCREASE

TAPS and the survivor community have supported increasing DIC for many years. It is the top priority for The Military Coalition (TMC) Survivor Committee, which TAPS co-chairs.

Caring for Survivors Act of 2021 (S.976, H.R.3402)

- ★ Brings DIC in line with benefits to surviving spouses of Federal employees Comprehensive Remarriage Legislation

Surviving military spouses who remarry before the age of 55 currently lose their survivor benefits. There have been several previous bills related to remarriage, but they were not comprehensive and excluded large populations of survivors. TAPS is working to ensure the introduction of a comprehensive remarriage bill in the 117th Congress that includes all surviving military spouses.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT PENDING LEGISLATION, PLEASE CONTACT POLICY@TAPS.ORG

SURVIVOR EDUCATION BENEFITS

TAPS was honored to speak with the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Education on education issues and priorities and how both departments can better support surviving families. We also worked with Congress to introduce several bills related to survivor education benefits:

Colonel John M. McHugh Tuition Fairness for Survivors Act (S.1095, H.R.2457)

- ★ Guarantees in-state tuition for survivors receiving Chapter 35 education benefits

Fry Scholarship Enhancement Act (S.1096)

- ★ Expands eligibility for the Fry Scholarship to the families of those who die in the 120 Day Release from Active Duty (REFRAD)



202-588-TAPS (8277) ★ TAPS.org

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors offers comfort, care, and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one.



 TAPS is a participant organization in the Combined Federal Campaign, No. 11309

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS
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Arlington, VA 22201

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“What we once enjoyed and deeply loved we can never lose, for all that we love deeply becomes part of us.”

~ Hellen Keller

