

For Immediate Release

For a review copy of the book
or an interview with the author,
please contact Dottie DeHart,
DeHart & Company Public Relations,
at (828) 325-4966 or DSDeHart@aol.com

Let There Be Light:

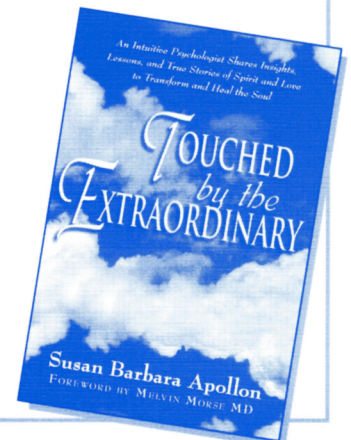
Nine Ways to Make Space in Your Grief for Some Holiday Joy

If you've lost a loved one, you may be dreading the holidays. Intuitive psychologist Susan Apollon offers some helpful hints on getting through the toughest time of the year.

Yardley, PA—If you've recently lost a loved one—and even if it happened not so recently—the holidays can be heart wrenching. The stark contrast between glowing lights and the darkness of your sorrow is difficult to take. Frankly, you'd like to crawl under the covers and hide until January 2. But according to Susan Apollon, an intuitive psychologist who works with grieving people, it *is* possible to find some pleasure, even a touch of joy, in the holiday season.

“The holidays *are* painful if someone you love has recently died, or if you're going through a divorce, or even if your child has moved away,” says Apollon, author of *Touched by the Extraordinary: An Intuitive Psychologist Shares Insights, Lessons, and True Stories of Spirit and Love to Transform and Heal the Soul* (Matters of the Soul, 2005, ISBN: 0-9754036-4-8, \$19.95). “Special days remind us of our loss. Family is supposed to be together during the holidays, and when things aren't the way they're 'supposed' to be, of course it's distressing.

“But you *can* get through the holidays,” she promises. “In fact, even if your grief is very fresh, you can create a space to celebrate in your own way.”



Here are nine hints for making space in your grief for some holiday joy:

- **First, give yourself permission to cry.** Apollon's mantra on dealing with grief is "face it, embrace it, and replace it." In other words, the only way to "get over" sadness is to experience it. "If you need to cry, cry, even if you're at a party and have to leave the room," says Apollon. "You might even set aside an evening to get in touch with your grief. Fix the cocoa you used to drink with your mother or go through your photo albums. It's healthier to feel the sadness and loss than to detach yourself from it. It's right and normal to grieve; just don't make it the dominant part of who you are."

- **It's okay to break tradition. It's also okay to say no.** You know your own limitations, says Apollon. If you simply can't face hosting your annual holiday feast, complete with dozens of relatives, don't try to soldier through it for the sake of your guests. People will understand. In fact, it's okay to leave town altogether. "Some people find it helpful to get away completely, to somewhere that doesn't remind them of holidays past," notes Apollon. "You might consider a tropical vacation, or you might take the time to visit a friend across the country. Doing something completely different can be a good coping mechanism, especially for that first tough year."

- **Consciously attach a new meaning to the holidays.** Holidays are difficult because they remind you that someone special to you—someone who should be there—is gone. In your mind, your daughter (or mother or husband or friend) *is* Thanksgiving or Christmas or Hanukkah. Without that person, family dinners and parties just don't have the same meaning. That's why Apollon suggests you find a new way to connect with the person you've lost. "Buy the gifts that you would be giving to your lost loved one and donate them to a charity or volunteer in a hospital or soup kitchen," says Apollon. "If you consciously guide yourself to attach a new meaning, one that still involves your lost loved one, you will find that you are able to create a new beginning for your holiday celebrations with that person."

- **Honor your lost loved one in a way that feels comfortable to you.** It's usually better to acknowledge your loss than to pretend that nothing has changed. You might light a special candle for your loved one, hang a tree ornament in his memory, or bring out a favorite photo. "Some clients actually set a place at the table for their missing family member," says Apollon. "I've even had a few tell me they received a 'message' of gratitude from their loved one for acknowledging him or her! On the other hand, some people discover that the empty chair is more upsetting than comforting. Do what feels right to you."

- **Invite your loved one to be a part of your holiday experience.** Apollon means this literally, not figuratively. She suggests that you talk with your lost loved one and share your feelings with him throughout the holidays. Ask for guidance and help from the person. He *will* hear you and may even send a sign—perhaps a whiff of his cologne or a smoky image in a photograph or a synchronistic moment—so pay attention. "There are many ways to communicate with someone who isn't with us in the physical sense," says Apollon. "Journaling your feelings to the person can help you release your pain and provide a greater sense of clarity. I often encourage my clients to verbally invite the person they are missing to be with them and to ask them for signs. However, don't anxiously wait around for the signs. Ask and then let it go. Allow whatever happens to unfold naturally."

• **If you don't want to go all out, do the holidays in a small way.** You don't have to decorate lavishly or bake up your usual six dozen secret-family-recipe homemade cookies to celebrate the holidays. Instead, put up a tiny tree and pop a pack of pre-made cookies in the oven. "Recognizing the holidays in some small way can be healing," says Apollon. "It's a way of accepting the fact that life goes on and of giving yourself permission to enjoy small pleasures."

Interestingly, says Apollon, some people who have passed on may want their families to adhere to holiday traditions. One of her clients dramatically scaled down holiday festivities the year her son died, setting a small, decorated tree on the table instead of putting up the usual big, lavishly appointed one. "The son let her know right away that he wasn't happy with it," says Apollon. "For three mornings in a row she woke up to find all the ornaments mysteriously removed from the tree and set neatly off to the side. Finally, she got the picture! Don't assume you need to minimize the holidays as an expression of grief—your loved one really *is* present, and he may very well want you to keep things the way they're 'supposed' to be."

• **On the other hand, if you absolutely can't find any holiday joy, go find some other kind.** Maybe you're too depressed or too angry with God to celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah even in a tiny way. That's okay, says Apollon. But don't deprive yourself of all joy. Go to a movie. Meet a friend for coffee. Take a long nature hike with your beloved dog. "The law of attraction says that if you want positive experiences, you need to do something that feels good," Apollon points out. "Make it a priority to do something that brings pleasure, even if it's not holiday related."

• **Learn to be conscious of the moment.** Practice being fully present in the now; it truly is where joy resides. "Every day of your life, every moment of your life, you can choose joy or not," Apollon reflects. "Of course, no one feels joyful all the time, but when we learn to live in the present—to really pay attention to how food tastes or what a child's laugh sounds like or how the snowflakes look against the edge of the woods—we can savor moments of delight even in a time of grief."

• **Realize that miracles really do happen at the holidays.** Here's the thing about the holidays, says Apollon. They really *are* magic. You knew this as a child but may have forgotten it. But spiritual occasions like holidays allow us to step outside the box we live in most of the time and let miracles in. "Paradoxical as it sounds, grief and holidays are a lot alike," she reflects. "They both help us detach from trivial things and focus on what's important, what's real. Open your mind and heart this year and see what happens. Maybe you'll feel a sense of connection with your loved one who passed on, or maybe you'll feel joy for the first time since your loss. Either one might qualify as a miracle."

Remember, says Apollon, the holidays won't always be such a struggle. If you work through your grief instead of repressing it, you'll find joy again.

"The holidays will never be the same again," she says. "That is true. But life is change, by its very nature. Little by little you will form a new identity and learn to connect with your lost loved one in a different way. You'll form new memories and new traditions. Grieving well can lead to spiritual growth, which means that life itself can

become richer and fuller after a profound loss. You'll never forget the person you lost, but you will find joy—even holiday joy—again.”

###

About the Author:

For close to twenty years, Susan Apollon has worked as a psychotherapist, psychologist, and healer, treating children and adults who are traumatized, diagnosed with cancer or other life-threatening illnesses, dealing with death and dying, and those who are grieving. She brings to her patients a gentle blend of warmth, compassion, and wisdom gained from surviving her own illnesses and losses; her expertise and training as a wife, mom, teacher, psychologist, researcher, and student of energy, mind, and consciousness; and finally, her own intuitive development.

Coming from a family of physicians (father, brothers, aunts and uncles, and daughter, Rebecca), Susan's intent is to heal (emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually), but at the level of the soul—and always with love and compassion. Focusing on the many blessings each of us has, she guides her patients to the recognition that we are here to live life in joy and peace (to be happy) and that the resources for this are within each of us. “Intention is everything,” she often tells her patients. “With love, clear intent, and choice, transformation, healing, and very often, spiritual awakening, become our reality. And when this occurs, everything feels wonderful.”

Among Susan's most treasured blessings are her husband, best friend, and partner, Warren, a practicing orthodontist in Langhorne, PA, whom she has known and loved for more than forty years, and her two grown children whom she respects, honors, and adores—David, a management consultant, and Rebecca, an emergency room physician. She has been in private practice in Yardley, PA, since 1991.

About the Book:

Touched by the Extraordinary: An Intuitive Psychologist Shares Insights, Lessons, and True Stories of Spirit and Love to Transform and Heal the Soul (Matters of the Soul, 2005, ISBN: 0-9754036-4-8, \$19.95) is available at bookstores nationwide and from major online booksellers.

For more information, please visit www.touchedbytheextraordinary.com.