

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 and allow yourself
to be surrounded by loving and
caring people." ~ Alan D. Wolfelt,



For more information or further
support, please contact Jane Corkish,
Children's Program Coordinator.

Tel: (604) 530-1115

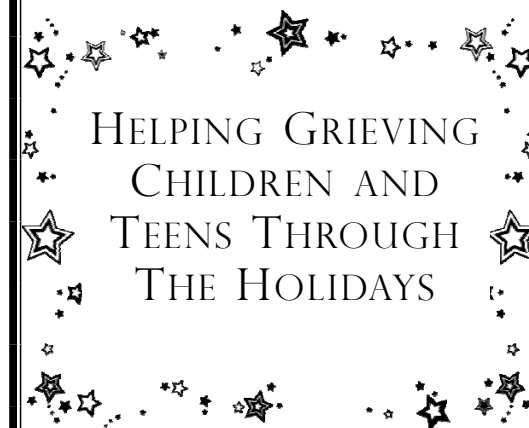
Email: janecorkish@langleyhospice.com



LANGLEY HOSPICE SOCIETY

20660—48 Avenue
Langley, BC
V3A 3L6

Phone: (604) 530-1115
Fax: (604) 530-8851
E-mail: info@langleyhospice.com





HELPING GRIEVING CHILDREN AND TEENS THROUGH THE HOLIDAYS



Bereaved children and teens may feel quite vulnerable as the familiar sights, sounds and smells of the Christmas season surround them. As a child or teen anticipates Christmas Day without the physical presence of the person who died they may experience many feelings. They may express these natural responses to grief through their behaviours, words and play depending on their age and developmental level.

Grieving children are often referred to as the "forgotten mourners". While adults struggle with how to fulfill their own or other's expectations through the holidays, a child's or teen's need for comfort or space may inadvertently be overlooked.

Sometimes, in an attempt to protect children and teens from the reality of death, adults may avoid speaking with them about the loss. This usually hinders the grieving process for everyone in a family. Providing children with opportunities to talk, draw, paint a picture, make a card or tell a story about the person who died invites them to share their feelings and actually helps the grieving process for the whole family.

"If a child is old enough to love, he or she is old enough to grieve." ~ Alan Wolfelt, Ph.D.



Here are a few suggestions that may help the entire family through their grief during the holidays:

Ask another trusted adult for help in caring for your children. This gives you a break to take care of yourself and helps your children know there is another adult who cares and is available if they have a need for support during the holiday season.

Remember that older children and teens can derive tremendous comfort from each other. If possible, allow your children to spend time with their peers during the holiday season.

Invite children and teens to help in planning how they wish to spend time during this holiday season.

- Ask them how they feel about the usual traditions - What do they enjoy most? What would they like to see change?
- Ask them for ideas on how they would like to remember the person who died.
- Decide on a specific time during Christmas Day or the holiday season to help them commemorate the loss of that person.
- Light a special candle with your child to honour the person that died.

- Encourage children to recall some of their favourite holiday memories about the person who died.
- Use the person's name as you recall and share memories about them. Memory boxes or stockings provide an expressive activity for children.
- Encourage children to make a special ornament or decoration in honour of the person who died.

Take good care of yourself. Acknowledge your own grief process, and as you explore your own personal feelings and begin to understand your own fears about the grieving process, your raised awareness about the natural responses to loss can be helpful as you support your grieving child or teen. **DO NOT BE AFRAID TO CRY WITH YOUR CHILDREN.** Crying is healthy grieving and children and teens need a healthy role model. Younger children may have difficulty articulating the jumbled mix of intense feelings in themselves and others. By modeling a healthy expression of your own feelings, you show the way for your grieving child or teen. Remember your feelings (which you cannot hide from a child) are much easier to deal with out in the open. And your children may surprise you with their compassion, wisdom and kindness. Is there a better Christmas gift for a family?

