

GIVE YOURSELF THE GIFT OF CHOICE THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

Posted on November 15, 2018 by Jennifer Stern, LISW



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Give Yourself the Gift of Choice this Holiday Season.

Choose to honor what feels right for you. There are no rules.

After my Mom died, I chose to honor the traditions of my family while adding some new. Honoring the traditions of my childhood after my Mom died felt comforting and in some ways empowering knowing that I was carrying on our family traditions in strength, in memory, in sorrow, in love, in the powerful knowing that my memories of holidays past would guide me to create more memories, different memories, new memories as I continue to live and celebrate life. I make an annual donation to Hospice in my Mom's memory and in honor of the compassionate care they provided during her last days. I also light a candle that burns for 24 hours, a yahrzeit candle, and say a prayer of remembrance and love on holidays. My brothers and I honor our Mom with her favorite key lime pie at family holidays, milestones and celebrations which always makes me smile.

If the thought of preparing Mom's cookies or Dad's roast is just too painful choose to make something different. There are no rules, if you want breakfast for your holiday dinner so be it. Get creative. Bring to the holidays this year what creates space, what makes you feel emboldened, able to come to the table with family or friends and honor the light in you that continues to shine even in the darkness of grief.

If you choose not to join family and friends this holiday season consider volunteering. Share the love that you are missing with others who may have never had it.

If leaving your home feels like too much perhaps you will choose to engage in an act of loving kindness by making a donation in your loved ones name. Donate to the Humane Society if your loved one was an animal lover, to the Foodbank if your loved one was a foodie, to the library if your loved one was an avid reader, and so on.

Choose to give yourself the gift of extreme self care this holiday season. Holidays can be intensely emotional. If you feel the need to cry, cry. If you feel the need to scream, scream. Feel your feelings and nurture yourself in the most loving and compassionate of ways. Surround yourself in comfort by engaging your five senses in self care. Rest if you feel like resting. Dance if you feel like dancing. Go for a walk. Take a long hot bath or shower. Breathe. Breathe in strength and healing, breathe out pain and suffering. Know that all feelings are okay. Grieving is hard work. Grieving during the holidays can be especially difficult. There is not one way or a right way to grieve.

Remember your loved one:

- Share stories.
- Go through pictures of treasured memories.
- Make ornaments with photographs of your loved one.
- Light candles and say a prayer in their honor.

- Make their favorite foods.
- Listen to their favorite music.
- Create a memory box: have each family member write down a memory on a piece of paper, read it out loud and then put it in the box. Each year you can add more memories while sharing memories from the years before.

Or don't.

If remembering your loved one feels like too much, if it is just too painful, then choose instead to focus on remembering yourself:

- Make your favorite foods.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Watch your favorite movie or shows.
- Write holiday wishes for yourself about how you hope to feel next year at this time.
- Make resolutions for yourself, for your healing.
- Gift yourself faith in yourself, in your healing, in your ability to endure the deep pain of grief while nurturing and caring for yourself.
- Be kind to yourself.

There are so many things in life we do not get to choose but we can choose how we endure pain. We can choose how we care for ourselves, honor ourselves, and encourage ourselves to continue on. We can choose to honor our loved ones by living our lives with deeper meaning, connection, and awareness of just how lucky we are to have loved and been loved, and that we can love and be loved still. Choose to honor yourself. Choose to give yourself the gift of choice this holiday season.

Comments



Jennifer Stern, LISW - 2018-11-19 12:38:21

Thank you Hayley. I appreciate your comment and am glad you found my article helpful. Please feel free to share with those that might benefit. Thank you.



Hayley - 2018-11-16 20:55:43

These are such great tips, Jen. This time of year can be really difficult for many. Thanks for sharing!



Jennifer Stern, LISW - 2017-12-05 21:19:34

Thank you Sylvia. I am so glad you found this article helpful. Take care.



Sylvia - 2017-12-05 18:28:43

Thank you for sharing this wonderful resource and making it available to so many people!



Jennifer Stern, LISW - 2017-11-19 13:26:29

Yes Diane this is true, you are doing okay and you can not fix others. :) Blessings to you as well. Take good care of yourself.



Diane - 2017-11-18 16:12:12

This article reminded me know I am doing okay and that I can't fix others...Blessings abound.♥