



A Program of Conley Outreach Community Services
P.O. Box 931, Elburn, IL, 60119.
conleyoutreach.org
630/365-2880

Community Care Team News November/December 2004

In This Issue

This issue is dedicated to holiday grief and is based on an article by Mary O'Brien at Fox Valley Hospice. We hope it will be helpful for those who have recently lost a loved one. Please pass this newsletter along to others who may need this information.

Holiday Survivorship Skills

The holidays are a traditional time of joy and laughter, sparkle and glitter, sharing and gift giving. But for people who are grieving, the holidays may seem inappropriate, affronting, and painful.

The holidays are a time of remembrance of past celebrations, of present get-togethers, and of future opportunities to break away from everyday stress. But for people who are grieving, the holidays may be a time of mixed emotions, feelings of being overwhelmed with multiple demands, and the pain of loves lost. As the holidays approach, think about how you take care of yourself during this vulnerable time.

1. Acknowledge Grief Work as Real Work

Adjustment to the death or dying of someone close to you does not simply come with time. The work of grief demands that you deal with all the feelings that loss engenders. This work takes psychic and physical energy that

can leave you unable to deal with the extra demands of the holiday season.

2. Allow Yourself To Be Merely Human

Avoid perfectionistic expectations during the holidays. Let some things slide. If you really want to do all the cooking and baking, let the dusting go. Enlist the aid of others "in the holiday spirit of sharing." You do *not* have to do it all yourself this time.

3. Plan Ahead

Sit down with your family and friends ahead of time to discuss those activities, experiences, and people that make the holidays special for you. Decide to do a few special things with a few special people, not everything with everybody.

4. Set Limits

Tell your family, friends and yourself now – and continue to remind them – that you are on a stress-reduction diet this holiday season. You will not be over-doing, over-shopping, over-cooking, over-complying, or over-worrying. Put a sign on your bathroom mirror or refrigerator to remind yourself or others.

5. Change *Shoulds* to *Wants*

Be aware of your own statements to yourself. Are you saying, "I *should* do this or that?" Decide which of your "shoulds" you really "want" to do and make those your priorities. Remember:

You should not “should” yourself; there are enough other people doing that already.

6. **Strive For a Balanced Lifestyle**

With all the parties and demands of the holidays, it is difficult for anyone to get enough rest and exercise. It is easy to overindulge. Set Exercise as a Priority – It is an antidote to depression. Learn Relaxation Techniques – They are an antidote to stress. Don’t Overdo the Eggnog – Alcohol is an antidote for nothing.

7. **Tell Others Clearly What You Want and Need For The Holidays**

Do not be shy or embarrassed to let others know what you want from them in terms of emotional support, help, or sharing. Mind-reading of yours or others’ needs is best left up to fortune tellers. Unknown expectations generally go unfulfilled and lead to disappointment and bad feelings.

8. **Honor The Old/Create The New**

This holiday time may not be like previous ones. But what *will* it be like? Realistically, this may be the last holiday with your ill family member. How can you make it the best?

If this is the first holiday time without your family member, include your deceased loved one to the extent that you can; the memory of him or her will be with you this holiday season no matter what you do. Consider giving gifts in memorial to the deceased; consider giving love to others in honor of the love you have received. Only you can put the joy into the holidays.

Holiday Bereavement Programs

Each year Conley Outreach sponsors special holiday programs for bereaved families and individuals. This year’s events include:

Handling the Holidays helps grieving families face the holidays without their loved one. There are special activities and information for children and adults. Child care is also available for very young children. This FREE program is led by bereavement specialist, Nancy Moeller, MSW/LSW. It will be held **Sunday, November 14** at 2 pm at the Elburn Congregational Church. The church is located at 100 E. Shannon Street in Elburn at the corner of Route 47 and Shannon.

The Blessing of the Manger is a holiday tradition at Conley Corners (Route 47 and Pierce) in Elburn. Come for special music, food, the manger dedication and remembrance of loved ones on **Monday, November 29 at 7 pm.**

Remembering the Children/Candle Lighting. This national event on **Sunday, December 12** was started by Compassionate Friends, International to commemorate children who have died. **The local event will take place at 7 pm at the Conley Farm,** with a candle lighting. The memorial tree will also be lit this evening. The Conley Farm is located at the corner of Dauberman and Main Street Road outside of Kaneville. Please use the Main Street entrance. Please arrive by 6:45pm.

For more information about these events, contact Jan at 365-6464.

We Need Your Help!
November & December 2004

1. *Holiday Spirit* is a joint program between Conley Outreach/West Towns, the Kaneland Schools, area businesses, churches, and other organizations to help local needy families at Christmas. We need volunteers to help sort donations and to staff the Elburn and West Towns offices during distribution. If you can help for a couple of hours in mid-December, please let Carol know (365-2880).

2. *Salvation Army Kettles*. Conley Outreach is the West Towns area Salvation Army representative. We receive a very small amount of money each year to help local needy families. We have the opportunity to increase the amount we receive by participating in the Red Kettle program. **All donations made in kettles placed in the West Towns villages will go directly into our local fund.** This would be in addition to our annual budget.

We are looking for groups to sign up for a Saturday morning slot (9am – Noon) November

27- December 18. It could be a scout troop, 4-H group, a church group, business or civic organization. Members could rotate through in 1 hour shifts to cover the morning. All children and youth volunteers must be supervised by a parent or organization leader. If you or your group would be willing to be a bell ringer, please let Carol know (365-2880).