



Dealing with Holiday Grief

This blog is a difficult one for me, as I am writing it I am living it, Christmas is a hard time of year. For many people Christmas can be hard, financially, emotionally, relationally. A regular Christmas can add stress, friction and sadness; add loss to the mix and it can be unbearable. Two weeks ago we lost a family member unexpectedly, I was already feeling overwhelmed by school, a strained ligament in my ankle and fatigue Christmas was not on my mind.

Now here I sit, two and a half weeks before Christmas and I am struggling to find the spirit to face Christmas. That is my problem. I am struggling. I am a journalist and this past weekend I went to cover a “Breakfast with Santa” event. Christmas trees, children, community service, decorations, Christmas music and me – the journalist who had hit a funk. I got lost in the festivities and the stories of others and then I came home and I laid to rest the struggle.

My therapist urged me to “sit with the uneasy feelings.” I do not do that well, I distract, I ignore and I bury, so this time I decided to try just sitting with how I felt. It is not easy. Sitting with uncomfortable feelings is like sitting with someone who annoys you to no end. They want to be heard, they want to be acknowledged and they want your attention. That is what I did, I gave them my attention, I listened, and I sat with them. It took me a while but finally I was able let them exhaust themselves. It meant some tears, some anger, and having to take a lot of deep breathes. Just being and sitting with your emotions is hard work but it is also a necessary part of the grieving process.

The best advice that I can give at this time of year when dealing with grief and loss is to make sure you are not going through it alone, you need support, whether it is family, friends, a pastor or a therapist. The second piece of advice is the advice my therapist gave to me: “Sit with the uneasy feelings.” Feelings change, they are not permanent, they can be persistent but when we face them, acknowledge them and experience them we give them a chance to shift and change. In doing so we also give ourselves a chance to be freed from them. Permission. The best gift you can give yourself and your loved ones in a time of loss is the permission to grieve and to sit with your feelings and take the time you need to heal and come to terms with the loss and moving forward as you are ready.

Barbara Hutchins