CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF YOUR LOVED ONE.

Hoag CARES Program
949-764-8585
HOW DO YOU KNOW YOU’RE FEELING BETTER?

Although everyone has his/her own style and timeline of grief, you can measure your progress by certain feelings and behaviors that come about as you feel better.

As your sense of humor returns, and you find yourself laughing; or your mood swings are not so high or so low, you can feel the time lengthen between upsets, then you know you’re feeling better.

When you hear yourself giving some human qualities to your deceased loved one as you recall past moments, then you know you’re moving through the worst of your grief.

As you find yourself making major decisions, you take responsibility for determining the quality of your life, you are feeling better.

When you find yourself letting go of people who have caused you pain or frustration and making new friends, you insure that you will have supportive people around you in the future and seldom have to be lonely.

Finally, when you learn that your life is in your hands and that you are capable of taking charge, you’ll know you are truly growing.
A YEAR IS A RELATIVE THING

By Ellen Zinner PsyD.

A year is the period of a planet’s revolution around the sun; three hundred and sixty five days for the earth, longer for some planets, shorter for others. In the life of a bereaved individual, the time period of a year is a relative thing.

On the one hand, survivors often are amazed that so much time has passed since the death. Four seasons weathered; the holiday periods endured. It seems impossible that they have borne the pain for a full twelve months. On the other hand, it may seem that time has not moved at all. Emotions and memories seem fresh. The news of the death and the ensuing days of confusion and painful decision making seem like only yesterday. With this perspective, comes a fear that little recovery has taken place at all.

Are you caught in a similar time warp? Has the passage of time been too quick and too slow? And what is to be done with the first anniversary of the death? If you are approaching this marker in your bereavement, it is time to take stock of where you have been and where you are heading.

The first death anniversary is a special day for recognizing the loss. I have no doubt that you have been thinking daily about the loss and change in your life, but this day looms larger than most. It brings back the sadness of the death itself with renewed force sustained by a year of experiencing the full impact of the loss.

The day can also be used as a special day for celebrating the life of the deceased. Grieving stems not from the death itself but from the loss of the person. It is the loss of the laughter, the love, and the connections past, present and future which we mourn.
How can you celebrate the life of your loved one? This is the challenge of the death anniversary. One family I know takes gold balloons to the high school track where their son had competed and lets float the personal message that each had written to him on the balloons. One widow picnics by the lake where she sprinkled her husband’s ashes. Another family “celebrates” annually by having dinner together in a new restaurant that the daughter would have enjoyed.

Creating a positive ritual that can be either fulfilled alone or shared adds powerful and supportive meaning to the death anniversary. The death anniversary is also a day for acknowledging the living. This certainly includes you! The last twelve months have been demanding. You have handled your loss in the way in the way you have needed to survive. You deserve to recognize yourself as one who has endured great hardship and to take care of yourself in a way that will ensure your ability to make a new life for yourself.
ANNIVERSARY IDEAS

Make their favorite foods – *Get the family together to celebrate their life.*

Have friends & family write memories – *Create a memory book of all their stories.*

Plant a tree – *Plant it in their name and watch it grow over the years.*

Write names on rocks – *Place them around a home garden or near their gravestone.*

Candle holders – *Write your loved one’s name on the candle holder then light a candle in their honor, or whenever you are thinking of them.*

Birthday cake – *Have a local bakery super-impose a photo of your loved one on the cake and celebrate their life/birthday.*

Collage – *Create a giant photo collage. It’s a great way to remember all the wonderful times and memories.*

Champagne splits – *Create labels to put over the original bottle with loved one’s name on it and celebrate their life/birthday.*

Make an ornament every year – *Christmas can be the hardest. Make an ornament with a photo or paintings of significance in remembrance.*

Make a donation in their remembrance – *Send a check to a charity of your choice in memory of your loved one.*

Let balloons go – *Meet at the cemetery on their birthday and let loose a balloon for every year your loved one would have turned.*

Slideshow – *Create a DVD slideshow of old photos or home videos, so you can watch it any time you want.*

Crafts – *Create, paint, build, bake, do anything for the one you lost.*

Flower for every year – *Bring a flower for every year that your loved one would be turning and bring them to the cemetery, just sit and be alone with them.*

Write or make a card – *Write a card for your deceased loved one for various holidays.*