

Easter & Grief

Easter Is More Than a Day

While it seems that everyone should be eager to celebrate the holidays Easter, with its theme of death and rebirth, can be an unwelcome reminder of loved ones that won't be around this year. Although Easter Sunday is only one day the days leading up to and after are traditionally spring break from school. For those who have lost a child or sibling seeing friends and families reunite during the break can trigger grief responses that leave one feeling sad and depressed. Do you feel ambivalent about the upcoming Easter holiday? If so, you are not alone.

Faith Can Be Comforting

For some, depending on their experiences and religious practices, Easter can be a time of comfort and a reminder that we can rise above our grief.

Self-Care During Easter

Major holidays, such as Christmas and Thanksgiving are often spoken of regarding self-care not much is said about Easter. The fact that Easter is not on the same day every year and that schools often have differing spring breaks makes the time less predictable than other holidays such as Mother's Day and Father's Day. The unpredictability makes advanced planning difficult which can cause depression to sneak up on you.



Seven Ways to Deal With Grief and Celebrate Life On Easter

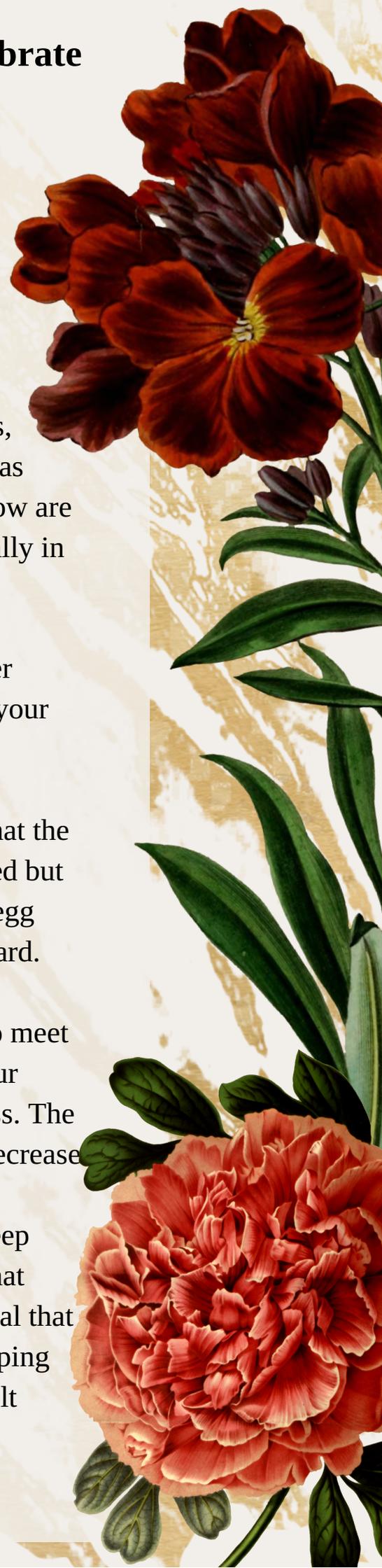
By Gloria Horsley

Easter may not be the time of year that first springs to mind when thinking about how hard grief can be on special days or festivals. However, Easter can be particularly tough, with talk of spring, new life, resurrection and rebirth. Everyone else seems to be feeling positive about warmer weather and longer days, and planning family get-togethers, yet someone who has been bereaved might not feel able to share in this. Below are seven things that helped me get through Easter especially in the early years of loss.

1. Ask for help. If you are not looking forward to Easter activities ask friends or family to assist you by taking your kids to an Easter egg hunt or dying eggs with them.

2. Accept change. Try to come to terms with the fact that the way you celebrated Easter in the past will have changed but that change is not all bad. You can pick up the Easter egg hunt another year or create a new tradition going forward.

3. Get support. Take the time before and after Easter to meet with a grief counselor or support group, a leader in your church or synagogue or others who have suffered a loss. The interaction, including talking and listening, can help decrease the sadness and depression that may get in the way of enjoying Easter. If you find yourself experiencing a deep depression or are considering an unhealthy behavior that could compromise your life or relationships, it is critical that you seek professional support that can give you the coping tactics necessary to keep you strong during this difficult time.



4. Practice self-care. Plan things that give you comfort around the holiday. As Easter is about renewal and rebirth consider trying something new that will help you improve mentally or physically. Take time off from work to get rest and relaxation and do something fun with your family or friends to remind yourself of what you have.

5. Renew your faith. If you see Easter as a religious holiday, this may be an opportunity to reconnect with your faith and attend an Easter service. Look for a service that has inspirational music and a message of hope.

6. Be prepared. The days leading up to any holiday can be more difficult than the day itself. There may be certain triggers during this time that push you toward depression if left unchecked. While you cannot totally prepare yourself for the emotions that you may experience, you can plan some quiet time in your schedule. If you prefer to be around people plan activities that distract you and ask friends and family to join. Go to a funny movie or take the kids bowling.

7. Celebrate life. Easter is a great time to plan an activity in remembrance of your deceased loved one. It can be as simple as recalling fun memories or looking at old photographs. If you want a more substantial activity you might consider planting a memory garden and inviting friends and family to contribute a plant or tree. Kids especially love this activity. The most important message this Easter is that our loved ones will always be with us in spirit.

