

## *Tender Days such as Birthdays, Holidays and other Significant Events*

*There are certain days throughout the year that are more difficult than most. Here are suggested ways to help you through them. These are just a few of many things you can do to make these tender days less painful. Please keep in mind that usually the days leading up to the Tender Days are more difficult than the actual day.*

*Birthdays: We still get together on my sons birthday and celebrate his life! We always have 2 of his very favorite foods: brownies and mint-chocolate-chip ice cream. I find it comforting to pause on this day and be thankful for my son & laugh at sweet memories. I will always continue this tradition.*

*My birthday was very difficult that first year, but it no longer is a problem for me, so there has been no change in how that day is handled. If you struggle with your day, let others know you need them.*

*Holidays: Depending on your family situation, Christmas could be changed in dramatic ways or continued in similar ways that offer just enough change to help make it different, yet keep it a traditional holiday that some members (especially younger children) still really need. Maybe having a new 'theme' on the Christmas tree, changing where you normally have the holiday meal, or having a family outing such as bowling or a movie, can make a new tradition that is acceptable to everyone.*

*If you no longer have children at home, perhaps taking a trip would be a good way to start a new holiday tradition and get your mind off the painful parts of the Holidays.*

*Volunteering in a soup kitchen is very healing! You may have to force yourself, but it's great therapy.*

*Hang a Christmas stocking with his/her name on it and request that everyone coming over during the holiday season write a favorite memory and put it in the stocking. On Christmas day read the notes.*

*Make homemade gifts or baked goods with tags, "From the (Smith) family in loving memory of (Bob)"*

*Make a special Christmas tree and name it after them, i.e. the "Robby Tree." Only put ornaments on this tree that signifies something about this person. It makes a neat conversation piece as it stirs memories of them, and even aids in some memories that bring laughter. (Often through tears, but still laughter!) Remembering them keeps them alive and a part of our lives.*

*Placing a holiday 'Grave Blanket' on the grave can help with the pain of holiday decorating and gift giving. You can also make wreaths and other things to decorate the graves. Or fill feeders for birds and squirrels and place it on the grave. Be creative- holiday wind chimes, etc are also nice.*

*Easter, Labor Day, July 4<sup>th</sup>, etc are holidays you can do things like plan trips to the zoo or some neat museum or a new activity to make changes that will be fun & unnoticed by younger children, yet OK with rest of the family. In time you will begin to enjoy these holidays again.*

*Other suggestions- Plant a tree, or memory garden. (Plant Forget-Me-Not's) Send flowers to someone special in memory of your loved one. Donate something to a needy family, or charity in their memory. Invite some of their friends over and ask them to tell you favorite stories about your loved one.*

*Footnote: Many people like to send balloons up to the heavens, but please remember that when they pop, animals such as birds and squirrels can eat them and die.*