



MOMENTS



MATTER

A taste to remember

SHANNON ROBERSON, BSW
Bereavement Coordinator

Thanksgiving is a time of family, fellowship and most importantly, food! I start looking forward to this day after taking the last bite of the current year's Thanksgiving meal. I'm very blessed to come from a long line of great Southern cooks, especially my late grandmother. She was known in her community and church for many of her famous dishes: fresh coconut cake, fried chicken, chocolate pie, biscuits, and turkey dressing — just to name a few. Honestly, I loved anything that she made. I especially remember the anticipation of her Thanksgiving meal. She insisted on preparing all the food that was served during this delicious meal. I can still remember seeing her in the kitchen wearing her apron tending to multiple dishes that were cooking on the stovetop and in the oven. It was one of my most favorite days of the year.

Unfortunately, when I was 16 years old, my dear grandma lost her battle with cancer. For several years, my family would plan our Thanksgiving meal together to continue the tradition. As hard as we would try, it just never seemed to be the same without her. Many years later, after I was married and had a family of my own, I was invited to my great aunt's home (my grandmother's sister) for Thanksgiving dinner. It was like a little slice of



heaven! My great aunt is also one of the best cooks that I've ever known. And just like my grandma, she insisted on preparing the entire meal on her own. There were several dishes served that my grandma had always prepared for us. Then I took a bite of the turkey dressing that I had not eaten since my grandma's last Thanksgiving meal. Oh, my goodness! At that moment, I was transported back into my grandma's kitchen. I know that every family has their own take on turkey dressing just like potato salad and deviled eggs, but I have to say that my grandma's is the best! My grandma and all of her sisters cooked remarkably similarly. It was amazing just how much the food tasted the same as I remembered.

In recent years, I've asked my great aunt to write down many of the family recipes. My grandma was such a natural born cook that I never remember her following a recipe or even seeing a cookbook in her home. My grandma and great aunt seemed

to just cook based on their memory from what they were taught by their mother. One of my most prized possessions I have today is a handwritten recipe, in my great aunt's beautiful cursive writing, for the turkey dressing. It was only just a few years ago that I was put in charge of cooking the Thanksgiving turkey. With bated breath and much prayer, I waited the three hours and 43 minutes required for it to be fully cooked! I knew that I could not serve turkey without turkey dressing, so I made my first attempt at preparing it for the first time. I don't mean to boast, but they were both delicious. I got many compliments and was able to proudly say that it was my grandma's recipe. Now it is just understood that it will be served with each Thanksgiving meal. I feel that it's now my responsibility to pass it along to my adult children to hopefully be passed on to generations to come. Even though my grandma has been gone for several decades now, I can still feel her presence when I take a bite of her delicious dressing.

Turkey dressing

Old-Timey Recipe

SHANNON ROBERSON, BSW
Bereavement Coordinator

Ingredients

Wheat bread
2 cups of flour
A tablespoon of oil
4-5 pieces of loaf bread
4 eggs
Black pepper
2-3 cans of chicken broth
½ stick of margarine

Instructions

1. Cook a small pan of wheat bread.
2. Stir up two cups of flour, tablespoon oil and water with a spoon.
3. Put in greased pan and grease top of bread.
4. Cook on 450 degrees until light brown.
5. Toast four or five pieces of loaf bread on broil and toast both sides. Let cool.
6. Pinch up in large pan.
7. Beat 4 eggs and add a little black pepper.
8. Then heat two or three cans of chicken broth.
9. Put ½ stick of margarine in and let it melt.
10. Add poultry seasoning until it tastes right, about 2 tsp.
11. Stir up with potato masher.
12. Fry in cakes on stove or in oven.

The first Thanksgiving

GENESSE B. GENTRY, Guest contributor

The thought of being thankful
Fills my heart with dread.
They'll all be feigning gladness,
Not a word about her said.

These heavy shrouds of blackness
Enveloping my soul,
Pervasive and throat-catching,
writhe in me and coil.

I must — I must — acknowledge,
Just express her name,
So all sitting at the table know
I'm thankful that she came.

Though she is gone from us
And we mourn to see her face,
Not one minute of her living
Would her death ever replace.

So, I stop the cheerful gathering,
Though my voice quivers
and quakes,

To make a toast to all her living.
That small tribute is all it takes.

A Thanksgiving dilemma

PATRICIA MORRIS, Guest contributor

“Mom, can we talk about Thanksgiving dinner? Let’s have it at my house this year,” Jenny said as she sipped a cup of coffee in her mom’s kitchen. Her mom, Janice, realized that the holiday conversation had finally arrived. She wanted to please her children but also had her own idea. “I’ve been thinking about Thanksgiving too, Jenny dear,” replied Janice. “Your brother, Bob, wants all of us to go away for the weekend. I don’t care for that idea this year. Your dad died just a few months ago, and I don’t want to go away just yet.”

“I understand you don’t want to go anywhere, but I live across town,” said Jenny. “We can have Thanksgiving at my house, and I’ll take care of everything. You won’t have to lift a finger except to drive over on Thanksgiving.”

Janice thought for a moment, wishing she could get her daughter to understand her desire to have Thanksgiving just one more time at her home. She knew it would be a lot of work to get ready, and she was getting older, but she enjoyed doing things for her family.

Finally, Janice responded, “I know you want to have Thanksgiving in your home, but I would really like to have it just one last time here. I do enjoy getting ready and having everyone in the house. I love all the noise and smells. Maybe this year, instead of me doing all the work, everyone can bring a dish. That will help me from doing all the cooking, and it will make it more affordable for me. I’m still getting used to not having two social security checks each month.”

Jenny thought about what her mom said and knew how much her mom loved getting ready for holidays. “Do you think you will be able to handle it this year?” she asked. “You don’t think it will be hard without Dad? Mom, I love you and don’t want you to do something that will make you hurt.”

“Honey, I hurt every day your dad is not with me,” said Janice, “but I know he would want me to go on and enjoy our family holidays. You know how we always go around the room and say what we are thankful for on Thanksgiving? Well, I thought this year we could go around the table and share a fun memory of your dad. I will enjoy hearing what everyone has to say. I love hearing you all talk about your memories of him.”

Honey, I hurt every day your dad isn’t with me. But I know he’d want me to enjoy our family holidays.

Jenny thought this sounded like a good idea. “Mom, that sounds like fun. It will be nice to remember him and laugh about his silliness,” she said. “But do you think Bob will be okay with this idea?”

“Well, I think he’s afraid the day will be full of tears, but your dad wouldn’t want that,” said Janice. “There may be a few tears, but I’m okay with that. I miss him so much and can’t help but cry at times. I look forward to having the grandchildren here and listening to their memories, too.”

Janice rose from the table to clean their cups. Jenny coming over for coffee each week meant so much to her. Janice turned to her daughter. “Maybe next year we can go to your house — if I get to bring my sweet potato casserole!”

“I would not allow you in my house without it!” replied Jenny. “Honey, thank you for understanding about Thanksgiving,” said Janice. “Maybe Bob will have a good idea for celebrating Christmas!”

The way each family celebrates a holiday after the death of a loved one is up to them. There really is no right or wrong way to celebrate. Starting a new tradition, changing the location, going away, inviting different people to the meal or keeping things the same are all acceptable ideas.

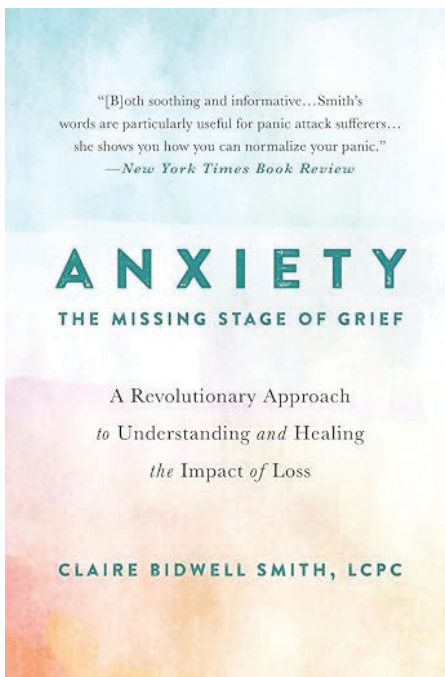
What works for one family may not work for another. The best thing to do is to talk with your family, let them know what you can and cannot do this year.

Also, do not feel obligated to participate if you don’t want to this year. Grief is different for everyone, as how we react to our grief.

If you have any specific questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your bereavement coordinator.

Book Review

JESSICA SIMANDLE, BSW
Bereavement Coordinator



The world in which we live is increasingly anxiety-stricken.

Before our collective trauma of experiencing a once-in-a-century pandemic, clinicians were seeing an uptick in individuals seeking support to manage their growing anxiety. The media reports how people, worldwide, were experiencing an epidemic of loneliness. While we should be more connected to one another by technology and social media, the opposite is true. We lead busy, distracted lives, choosing to interact with each other through Facebook and Instagram rather than forming connections with friends and family in a social setting.

As the author noticed more anxiety in her clients, she began to connect the dots that anxiety was related to grief. She had experienced the anxiety that comes with grief in her own life with the deaths of both her parents by the time she was in her early 20s. Bidwell-Smith's beautiful, artist mother died of late-stage colon cancer when the author was only 18. She was a college freshman, and despite years of decline, her father's attempts to prepare her for her mother's death, and the support of school staff, she never believed that her mother would die. When her mother succumbed to her illness, her shaken world view left the author feeling confused and vulnerable. With limited support from people who understood what she was experiencing, the author felt very alone in her grief. That's when she began to have anxiety attacks. She felt completely helpless to understand or control when her anxiety would overwhelm her. Through her education; she came to understand the connection between her grief and her panic attacks. Years later, after her father's death, she entered therapy.

In her therapist's office, she learned coping strategies to face the pain of grief and delve further into greater

self-exploration. In the introduction, Bidwell-Smith names her life's work as "to help change the culture of death and dying." Furthermore, she writes, "The truth is we will all die ... If we could lean into that fact, and support each other as we face it together, we could live less anxious, more peaceful, and vibrant lives."

It's Bidwell-Smith's wish for grieving readers to know that they're not alone. The reader should read the book chronologically as each chapter builds on the last. Use it as a guidebook with a highlighter or make notes in the margin. Read it slowly, taking time to process the information and reflect on your own long-held narratives and begin to rewrite the changing stories about your life and relationships. Throughout the chapters, there are exercises and practical advice. She also asks readers to check in on their anxiety, rating it on a scale from 1 - 10. If readers are experiencing regular panic attacks or obsessive worry she encourages them to skip to the sections of the book that teach how to calm themselves.

Bidwell-Smith encourages the reader to cultivate resilience. Resilience does not mean the person shouldn't be grieving. It means that the person has full permission to feel all the things that come with grieving without falling completely apart. She writes, "Two things can be true at the same time. People often think they have to pick one. They either have to have everything together and are back at it, or they're grieving." She sees beauty in grief. As a teacher, grief instructs us to think about what's meaningful in our lives. It forces us to look at who we are and what we value. If we allow ourselves to be taught, our grief can be expanding and transformational. Through this transformation, hopefully we'll be more compassionate towards ourselves and others.

Changes

SABRINA MCKEITHAN, RN

At this time of year, we are ever aware of the changes that are occurring around us. How quickly the months pass us by! Then comes the cooler weather, with rain, wind, falling leaves and, of course, snow. All of this makes us feel cold and raw, like our emotions when experiencing a loss. Tears, darkness, barrenness, loneliness and never-ending exposure to our overwhelming emotions — we tend to feel these more when there is a change in the weather.

We wonder how we are going to get through this quagmire. We take a few steps forward, and then we're reminded of a loved one and that sinking feeling of loss surrounds us. Our emotions are even tougher when there's a holiday coming up, especially Christmas, when families get together and celebrate.

Although seeing family get together is so special, there is an ache in our hearts that takes a long time to ease.

We get to the time of opening gifts. We pick them up and admire the beautiful paper, bows, ribbons, and shapes of the packages, and we start to wonder what's inside. Gently, we pull off the bows, ribbons, and sticky tape, to avoid ripping the beautiful Christmas paper. We open the box with glee and find the item inside is wrapped in tissue paper, which we slowly pull aside to find the most precious gift — a gift that means the world to you, making your heart sing and your whole self feel happiness.

If you think about it, life is like a gift wrapped in multiple layers with beautiful paper, bows, and ribbons. When we're born, the bows and ribbons come off. When we head off to kindergarten, a layer of beautiful paper comes away, and as each cycle in our life evolves, it sheds yet another layer of delight.

We get to the center of the gift box and find that it was love that was wrapped up ever so gently, with so

much thought to the shape of the box, wrappings, color, adornments, bows, and ribbons. Love comes in so many different layers, reminding us how precious life is. Life can be tough at times, with unexpected twists and turns.

Losing a loved one is one of the hardest things that any one of us will go through. Not one person goes through a loss the same — our coping mechanisms are different, and the grief process is a very personal one.

No one can understand what you go through or how you feel, as this journey is personal and private to each of us.

Let your love shine no matter how hard it may be. Love will remind you that life is ever present, and we must choose how to move forward and evolve. Life will change, but at the end of the day, love will get us through any difficulty in life.





Grief support groups

NORTH CAROLINA

SURRY COUNTY

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11:30am

November 9th

Union Hill Friends Church
2315 Red Brush Road, Mount Airy, NC 27030
Fonda Younger: (336) 789-2922

2nd Thursday of each month @ 11am

November 9th

Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge Street, Elkin, NC 28621
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650

4th Monday of each month @ 10am

November 27th

Mountain Valley Pilot Mountain office
129 Veterans Drive, Pilot Mountain, NC 27041
Jessica Simandle: (336) 583-8589

4th Thursday of each month @ 6pm

November 23rd

Mountain Valley Elkin office
968 N Bridge Street, Elkin, NC 28621
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650

YADKIN COUNTY

1st Thursday of each month @ 11am

November 6th

SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Avenue, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

3rd Thursday of each month @ 6pm

November 16th

SECU Hospice Care Center
243 N Lee Avenue, Yadkinville, NC 27055
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

WILKES COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 6pm

November 20th

Reins-Sturdivant Funeral Home
270 Armory Road, North Wilkesboro, NC 28659
Kelley Tolbert-Holbrook: (336) 526-2650
Melissa Causby: (336) 679-2466

VIRGINIA

HENRY COUNTY

1st Wednesday of each month @ 2pm

November 1st

King's Grant Retirement
350 Kings Way Road, Martinsville, VA 24112
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

2nd Tuesday of each month @ 10am

November 14th

The Community Fellowship
2674 Virginia Avenue, Collinsville, VA 24078
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

PATRICK COUNTY

3rd Thursday of each month @ 2pm

November 16th

Stuart United Methodist Church
101 East Blue Ridge Street, Stuart, VA 24171
Shannon Roberson: (888) 789-2922

GRAYSON COUNTY

3rd Monday of each month @ 2pm

November 20th

Mt Olivet United Methodist Church
Community Building
(gray building next to church)
6926 Carrollton Pike, Galax, VA 24333
Jessica Simandle: (888) 789-2922

No RSVP needed

Please attend the group nearest you.
Meeting dates and times are subject to change

For more information, please call
the group's bereavement coordinator

Mountain Valley
THANKS
our special partner,
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Celebration of Life



You and your family and friends are invited to
CELEBRATE YOUR LOVED ONE

MEMORIAL SERVICES
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5TH • 6 - 7:30PM

You're welcome to attend
the memorial service nearest you

Cornerstone Baptist Church

116 S Reeves Mill Rd
Mount Airy, NC

Trinity Worship Center

5726 Highway 21
Jonesville, NC

Axton Baptist Church

173 Mountain Valley Rd
Axton, VA

Mt Olivet Community Church

6926 Carrollton Pike
Galax, VA

Light refreshments will be served

Please bring a photo of your loved one or other special item
to place on the remembrance table prior to the service

Please call with any questions: (888) 789-2922



Helpful books on grief and loss

There are more than 150 titles at the Alleghany, Stokes, Surry, and Yadkin locations of the Northwestern Regional Library • mtnvalleyhospice.org/grief-library



WELCOME

to the NEW Moments Matter, our bereavement newsletter

INSIDE:

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A Thanksgiving dilemma

Anxiety: The Missing Stage of Grief

+ November 2023 grief support group schedule



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