

Embracing the Blues,

We have now officially entered the Holiday season. This can be a very challenging time for people who are experiencing loss – recent or past. Holidays often bring back grief in surprisingly potent ways. Special events like Thanksgiving, Xmas and New Year's can remind us of happier times spent with loved ones who are no longer here. It can become quite difficult coping with these feelings especially in light of the seasonal merriment surrounding us.

When people are feeling very sad they tend to keep to themselves. They may want to go inward and try to cope alone. But there is another way. Hospice of Petaluma is hosting a series of 3 local drop-in groups for people who are experiencing grief over the Holidays. A support group can be extremely helpful. It's comforting to know that we are not alone and that we can also be of great assistance to others who are feeling the same way.

Our culture, particularly, has a hard time with grief. People often think that it is inappropriate to express their emotions in any kind of public way. There is the misconception that we should bear up and then get over grieving as soon as possible. How did this happen? In many more indigenous societies, the grieving ritual is honored and, in fact, offered as a regular community event. These cultures hold that grieving is a very natural and integral part of being human. They believe that grief and praise are one in

the same and they see the communal expression of grief to be as important to the health of the whole society as sharing births and marriages together.

I have been volunteering with Hospice of Petaluma for almost a decade. When I facilitate Grief support groups, I see the power of people sharing these hard times together. Suddenly we realize that we need not be isolated with our experience of loss. This is such a vibrant and caring community where we have so many opportunities to share our joy. I invite you to come forward and connect with your neighbors in an authentic sharing of your deeper sadness as well.