Dear Friends,

Thanksgiving will be here very soon. That doesn’t seem possible, yet the calendar doesn’t lie. Neither do the trees as leaves fall and the temperature starts dropping. Many things are different this year so this holiday time won’t be an exception. Let’s take a deep breath as we begin to anticipate holiday festivities. The challenge comes in figuring out what to do about it these next few months, especially if you have a sense of “run and hide” until January 2.

Recently a gentleman shared about how nice it was to come home for a holiday…good food already prepared, good conversations with family and friends, a time of relaxation. Now with both parents gone, if the siblings want to stay connected, it is up to them to make it happen. Who is willing to step up and either cook some food, host it, or clean up afterwards? A lot of work goes into making holiday gatherings happen. Now is a good time to start some conversations about what you, as a family, hope for this holiday season. Be ready to hear many different responses! At least it gets the discussion in gear. As you know, family members can grieve differently from one another. The discussion, though, gets each of you thinking about what is important in regards to this time of year. Re-evaluate the traditions. Do they still work? Also, decide how much energy, emotionally and physically, you have to give your family and friends. You do have the right to say “no” or limit the amount of time and money involved in activities. Remember to take care of you!

Thanksgiving and Christmas will come whether you want them to or not. Planning for this time can help you cope with the changes and emotions that tend to accompany the holiday season. Consider attending one of our Tree of Life programs. We would love to see you and it may provide some hope, comfort, and encouragement during this season.

The bereavement staff is available to answer questions or provide a listening ear if you are in need of extra support. Contact us at 1-800-297-4719 or 641-428-6208.

Thinking of you,

Amber, Joyce & Autumn
Bereavement Coordinators

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**Strategies to Help You Cope with Grief During Holidays**

1. Talk to your family about your anxieties and their expectations
   - accept there will be mixed emotions
   - accept offers for assistance with planning/preparations
   - ask for understanding and support

2. Redefine your definition of “holiday”
   - define what is most important (is it gifts, food, visiting, church services)
   - determine if you can make it easier
   - modify an old tradition or make a new one

3. Limit the time you spend together
   - make a 7-hour event 2-3 hours
   - select which events are most meaningful
   - it is ok to say “no” or “maybe”
   - drive yourself so you can leave if you want/need to

4. Plan to use your “rights” as a bereaved person
   - don’t be persuaded to do something that makes you uncomfortable
   - you have the right to mention your loved one’s name
   - rehearse responses to inevitable questions (How are you?)

5. Create moments of peace
   - look through pictures of past holidays
   - remember change is a natural part of living
   - take steps to cope and believe next year will be better
   - spend a few moments in silence to reflect on your loved one and give the rest of the day to others
Understanding Grief & Loss Support Group

This program provides grief education and support to any adult who has experienced a death of a family member or friend. Your loved one did not have to have received Hospice services in order for you to attend.

7 Monday mornings ~ Mason City

January 14 - February 18, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Hospice of North Iowa
Conference Room
232 2nd St SE, Mason City

7 Thursday mornings ~ Iowa Falls

January 24 - February 28, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
First United Methodist Church
619 Main Street, Iowa Falls

There is no charge for this group, but space is limited. To register, please call:
Hospice of North Iowa
1-800-297-4719 or 428-6208

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Holiday Sentence Completion

Something I enjoyed doing with my loved one during the holidays was………..

One of my happiest memories is…………

One of my fears about the upcoming holiday is…………………..

One way I can memorialize my loved one this holiday is to………………

Something I would like to do for myself this holiday is………………

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Hospice of North Iowa
Tree Lighting Services for 2018

**Osage**
Christian & Missionary Alliance Church
726 State Street
Monday, November 26, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Hampton**
St. Paul Evangelical Church
17 2nd St NE
Thursday, December 6, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Mason City**
Music Man Square
308 S Pennsylvania
Thursday, December 13, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Charles City**
St. John’s Lutheran Church
200 S. Main Street
Monday, December 3, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Clear Lake**
The Dock
500 Main Ave
Monday, December 10, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Iowa Falls**
First United Methodist Church
619 Main Street
Monday, December 17, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Lake Mills**
Salem Lutheran Church Chapel
401 S. Lake Street Monday,
December 3, 2018
6:00 p.m.

**Forest City**
TSB Bank
Conference Room
101 Hwy 69 North
Tuesday, December 11, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Someone remembered…
Someone honored…
Someone loved.
During our early morning walks over recent years, Ed and I had “a thing” about pennies we found just lying on the ground as we passed. We usually picked them up, and the deal was that if it was a “heads up”, it was his, otherwise it was mine. Six months after his death, I started having experiences with pennies always related to something with Ed.

The first “penny” experience occurred as I had parked last fall at our condo after having spent the summer in Iowa. It was a low moment for me, wondering if I could face the memories and the loneliness that were certain to arise. I turned to get out of the car and there on the ground between my feet was a bright, new penny, “heads up.”

The second “penny” experience came several weeks later when I had a whole day that was relatively free. Our 90 year old friend there at the complex called that he could not drive himself and his 86 year old wife. Would I please come and help them. Long story short, the day was over by the time I had taken them to doctors, to MRI scans, to the pharmacy, etc. At the last stop, I just looked skyward and sent a thought to Ed about how many days had we spent just this way, caring for our parents, attending to his sister, Adeline as she prepared for her death, supporting our good friend, Claudelle as she faced life without her husband and our close friend, and spending time with our hospice clients. We were so grateful for the opportunity to extend ourselves to others. I looked at the ground as I began walking toward the last stop and there on the ground ahead of my feet was another bright penny, “heads up.”

I felt that in the months following Ed’s death that I was going to have to find a pastime that would take up some of my time and introduce me to a new group of people who might become friends. Ed and I were always together and to plan a separate activity was a bitter pill to swallow, and just emphasized how different my future was going to be. A neighbor encouraged me to take Mah Jongg lessons for the mental stimulation, learning something new and meeting other folks...whatever. I did learn the game and found that I enjoyed my time and the game. I ordered my own set of tiles from Amazon. Upon their arrival, I emptied the box on the table to check for completeness. To my surprise, out fell a bright, new shiny penny, “heads up.”

The next episode occurred as my sister, another good friend, and I completed a very successful garage sale of much of Ed’s fishing equipment, most of his tools, his collections of odds and ends and things that he “might” use someday. It was a bunch of stuff. At any rate, as we closed up shop because we had literally nothing left to sell, there amidst the detritus was a bright shiny penny, “heads up.” My sister had noticed it and her question was, “What is that new penny doing here?” There wasn’t any earthly explanation that I could figure out.

The next “bright shiny new penny” arrived on what would have been Ed’s 80th birthday. I had all those memory cards to read. (Thank you all for taking the time to write and share.) The first one I opened was from a longtime friend and taped to his memory of Ed was a penny. Ed would have so loved that almost all of you sent a memory. Ed would have liked knowing that he was remembered, and that I had something beautiful to open and treasure on his birthday and to reread through the months and years ahead.

The most recent penny episode occurred at Lowe’s. A little over a year ago, Ed and I had planned to tile our small patio at the condo. He drew up a list of all the supplies, the colors, whatever. Well, I went to Lowe’s and got some materials. The man who was going to put down the tile told me to go back to Lowe’s and get a different color of concrete. So in the exchanging of one thing for another, returning unneeded items, and purchasing the correct materials, I decided to use all that cash that piled up from the returned items instead of using a charge card. So there I am in Ed’s favorite kind of store, holding the list he had made up for the project, moving forward on a project that we had planned together. I paid cash and had a penny coming back. I was just at the point of saying, “Just keep it!” when I realized that this was another penny episode about to unfold. Sure enough! The cashier handed me a “heads up” bright, shiny penny.

I really cannot explain these episodes. Other than the last one, I didn’t see them coming at all. They’re sort of fun. They make me think of Ed being in a playful, thoughtful manner as he often was in his life and staying connected to me now.