

A New Holiday to Celebrate Hope

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Everything is STILL a mess! Life is topsy turvey and I am now officially TIRED of it being that way. **EVERYTHING** has changed, been moved, misplaced, thrown away or just plain lost. I can't find anything and I am not sure I want to find whatever is left. The world cleaned house on me and somebody lost my way! Where am I and who am I now?!

I was just beginning to figure things out (for the umpteenth time) when the universe waved its arms and sent ripples cascading through my life again. As soon as I find whatever I am looking for, it moves or gets lost. Whenever I do find what I want, I have forgotten why I wanted it.

I tried being efficient once and I decided to buy everyone's birthday and holiday gifts early. I mean, whenever I saw something that would be "just right" for someone on my gift list, I bought it and stashed it away ... some place. When it came time to wrap it up and give it away, who could remember where it was hidden? Instead of spending the days before the holidays baking treats and singing songs, I was scouring the closets, the attic, the car trunk and my mother's basement, in search of THE gifts I had so carefully put away. What a mess!

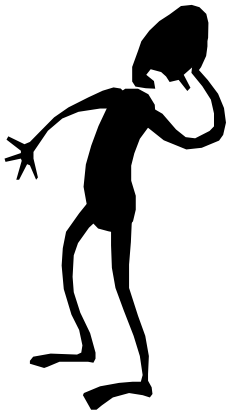


What a mess! I forgot how awful the holidays can be and now its time to be cheery again. Once I planned a wonderful holiday gathering and had everything done ahead of time. I mean *everything*. I had tried some new recipes and even HAND made table decorations and place cards.

(Martha S. watch out!) It was a sight to behold. I was so proud of myself. had not let grief “win” and I was “moving on”, “getting over it” and “reconciling my life”. I had invited lots of people to help me celebrate the holiday season even though I wasn’t quite sure I wanted to celebrate. I was **READY!**

I turned on the porch light, poured the punch, lit the candles and waited. And waited. And waited. I had done everything ... except mail the invitations.

I guess I wasn’t as “ready” to return to the Land of the Living as I thought.



It’s hard to have a party with no guests.

It’s hard to want to live in the light if you don’t have a flashlight or a light bulb. It’s hard to know where you put the gifts if you can’t remember what you bought or who you bought them for or ... the person you bought them for isn’t here anymore.

NOW what do we do? When the universe flip-flops and upside down is right side up and happiness seems impossible and the sight and sounds of the holiday season - any season - only annoy and hurt, what do we do to survive?

Survive? No, no, the world says we must learn to LIVE AGAIN, but how do you do that when everything has changed and nothing fits, belongs or feels right. My clothes don’t fit anymore. I can’t find my shoes and I can’t find HOPE anywhere.

I think I left it some place or maybe it was stolen from me.

That's it! Somebody stole my HOPE! Now tell me how to survive, let alone live without hope! Tell me that and maybe I'll listen.

WAYS TO FIND HOPE AND SURVIVE



1. Brush your teeth, every morning. No matter what else happens, do that and you are on your way to “recovery”. Of course, if you don’t want to recover, you still should brush your teeth. Just keeping a routine is a way to counteract the craziness. It is a “responsible, adult” thing to do and is a start. Just do it. Your dentist, mother and everyone you encounter will be glad you did.
2. Take out the trash. Just get it out of the house. Someday you can try getting it out on the right day.
3. Eat. Whatever you want, just make sure you eat whatever you are “supposed to”. Skip the “oughts” and “shoulds” right now and concentrate on the comfort foods. You can’t eat this way forever, but you might as well take advantage of your grief and treat yourself. If you find you can’t eat “a thing”, send it to me and I’ll help. We’ll diet together next month.
4. Buy a gift for yourself. Wrap it, but don’t hide it! Just when you think you are going “off the deep end”, open it up and enjoy.
5. While you are buying a gift for yourself, buy one for your loved one as well. Wrap it up and give it away to someone who might not otherwise have a gift. Pass on the love you shared together and it can never die.
6. Breathe. In and out. In and out. It’s that simple and that hard. Some days just breathing is all you can manage. Other days it’s a bit easier

so relax and enjoy those moments when you can remember your loved one's life instead of focusing only on the death.

Surviving really isn't too hard. Living can be. No matter how crazy the world or out of "sync" you feel, don't lose the treasure of your loved one's presence in your life. You don't have to say good-bye. You don't stop loving someone just because he died.

Put something that reminds you of your loved one in your pocket and every time you need a hug, just pat your pocket and recall the loving connection between you. I carry a rock with me always, to remind me of the steadiness, security and sturdiness of his love. I've carved the word HOPE on that rock so I won't forget what hope is all about.

The word "HOPE" is written in a large, stylized, serif font. The letters are filled with a gradient of colors: blue on the left, transitioning through yellow and orange to red on the right. The letters have a slight 3D effect with shadows.

Hope isn't a place or a thing. Hope isn't the absence of pain, or sadness or sorrow. Hope is possibility. Hope is the memory of love given and received.

In addition to carrying a rock in my pocket, I've decided to create a new holiday for the bereaved. Since we can't remember what day it is or how we are supposed to behave, we'll just celebrate everything all at once. You'll get one card a year and just keep opening it on whatever days are appropriate for you. I love you and want to send my thoughts and hugs, but with all the changes always occurring in my life, I just may serve watermelon in December and frost the cookies bunny pink in October.

Whatever. I'm trying and that's what counts! Hang in there. It gets better, honest. I just can't remember when.

HAPPY NEW *VALEASGRADUAWEENGIVNGMAS*

(That's I love you in HOPE)

