

Survivor Outreach Services Wisconsin National Guard

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Holiday Grief

The holidays, normally a festive time, can be filled with anxiety and feelings of despair for anyone who is grieving a loss of a loved one. Knowing the pain the holiday season can bring, here are some helpful thoughts that other bereaved persons have shared, with the hope of making the holidays easier to handle. Tips for coping with grief and loss:

1. **Take care of yourself**-It is easy to forget to get enough rest and to eat right. Taking care of yourself first will help you weather aspects of the holidays.
2. **Find a way to acknowledge the person you have lost**-Rather than avoiding the feelings, find a way to remember and acknowledge the person that is meaningful and positive.
3. **Incorporate memories or stories about the person into your family traditions**-Remember your friend or family member's role in holiday traditions and share those memories.
4. **Find new traditions that honor those who are no longer here**-Don't be afraid to make changes this year-sometimes it can be very stressful to keep up with "holiday traditions" - consider incorporating a new tradition such as a special decoration or moment of reflection to commemorate your loved one.
5. **Plan ahead**-Think ahead about what events will be especially emotional for you and evaluate what will best ease that pain, whether it be surrounding yourself with family or excusing yourself for a private moment.
6. **Help others in need**-Our greatest comfort may come in doing something for others; some persons feel they can acknowledge their loss more meaningfully by: volunteering to be with older people or children, helping in a hospital or soup kitchen, or helping a friend in need. The key is finding what is right for you.
7. **Don't be afraid to make changes**-Sometimes old traditions or routines can be too painful without important people present. Try something new this holiday season.
8. **Do what you can**-Do only what is special and meaningful to you this year. Be brave enough to say no, and be realistic enough to cancel plans when you change your mind.
9. **Ask for help**-Ask for and accept offers of concrete assistance with holiday chores like decorating, shopping, cooking or cleaning. Look for ways to involve other people in your planning.
10. **Speak to someone outside the family**-Contact Survivor Outreach Services for assistance with referrals for counseling.

If this is your first holiday season since the death of your loved one, know that this can be an opportunity for you to discover the kinds of activities, events, and situations that best work for you. The general trend is for things to become more tolerable with the passage of time, but this is not a given. Remember to be kind to yourself.



Websites:

- www.TAPS.org
- wisconsinmilitary.org/survivor-outreach-services
- www.snowballexpress.org/
- www.ourmilitarykids.org
- www.wreathscrossameric.a.org/

Financial Resiliency

As we read the headlines in the news about the uncertainty of the financial markets, many individuals have expressed some concern. Financial Counselors remind you that markets experience some level of volatility and even the best theorists cannot predict how markets will react in the future. That being said, it is appropriate to look beyond the short term (less than 2 years) headlines and review the basics of a short term savings and long term investment strategy. Naturally, short term savings is traditionally focused on low risk liquid assets. Granted, in many cases, due to this conservative nature, the return on those assets may not keep pace with inflation, but it meets their designed need.

For many people long term (more than 8 years) investing does not traditionally focus on isolated short term factors. Long term investment strategy looks at a long term perspective and focuses on long-term goals and maintaining a balanced asset allocation.

Recovery from the severe downturns do not occur as quickly as we would like, and in some cases there is no guarantee it will occur at all. For example, last year, investors celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the Nasdaq's (a popular financial index) all-time high. Will that index ever get back to where it was? Probably -- inflation alone will eventually see to that. The real question is: How long will it take? The take away is that recoveries from severe downturns are not always steady and upward, and there are setbacks. However, with all the doomsday news articles, Financial Counselors often remind folks that most of the financial market indexes are up over 50% as compared to March 2009 and many disciplined and systematic investors took advantage of having a long term strategy that included the ability to seize opportunities to purchase investments at lower price levels. But, here is the heartbreaking news: if the market goes down 1/3, it then needs to double from that level to recover (and that does not take into account inflation.) Likewise, if a financial index goes down 60%, it needs to increase by 150% for it to break even.

That brings us to the key lesson. This is a lesson taught in high school finance classes today. Any time is a good time to review your current situation and how you are invested in order to evaluate if it is appropriate for your long term needs and goals. Having broadly diversified assets is a viable option for making sure you are diversified across and within asset classes. A Financial Counselor can assist you to establish goals and help assess if your objectives remain on track.

Most Financial Counselors believe in the resiliency of the financial markets and can assist clients in being educated on tools to assist you with your objective, and then to stay focused to meet your long term goal. Financial Counselors can help you develop an investing strategy and assist in providing you the information you need to make decisions based on relevant and appropriate information. A Financial Counselor can be a great sounding board to help think through and help make non emotional and focused strategies and action plans. Your local Support Coordinator can provide you with names of Financial Counselors that are resources available to Survivors.—

Mark Dunlop SOS Financial Coordinator

Snowball Express



Snowball Express started in early 2006 with a simple idea: provide hope and new memories to the children of military fallen heroes who have died while on active duty since 9/11. America should honor and pay tribute to the children of those military fallen heroes who have died while honorably serving since 9/11. In December of 2006, nearly 900 family members from all across America and the world gathered in Southern California for an unforgettable holiday gathering. Kids and widows discovered they weren't alone. And they found they weren't forgotten. We're already beginning to plan Snowball Express 2011. We are looking forward to hosting the children of our fallen military heroes in Dallas, Texas December 9 through December 13, 2011.

*****Our Snowball Express registration is now open and ready to receive all of your information*****

Click [HERE](#) to register your fallen hero and family. The first item you will enter is your e-mail address and a password. Remember your password is case sensitive, so please write it down in a location that is easy for you to access.

Our Military Kids

Our Military Kids is a non-profit organization that provides grants to children of deployed and severely wounded service members. The grants are used to provide enrichment activities intended to help children cope with the deployment or injury of a parent. We recently received a donation from the employees of Alion Science & Technology to test-pilot an expansion which will temporarily provide availability of our grant program to children of fallen service members. We are rolling out this pilot program with modest initial start-up funds. The test-pilot will allow us to provide approximately 100 grants to children of service members killed in action while serving overseas in 2011.

Our application process is very simple. The child's caregiver must complete our one-page grant application (one application for every child) and attach the following documentation:

*A copy of the form DD 1300 (Report of Casualty Statement) OR a copy of the Certificate of Death;

*A form of ID for each child identifying them as a military dependent;

*A brochure or registration form showing fee information from the organization providing the activity. Because our funding is limited, the availability of this program will be restricted to the children of fallen service members who lost their lives while serving overseas in support of OEF/OND in the calendar year of 2011. www.ourmilitarykids.org

Wreaths Across America

Our mission, Remember, Honor, Teach, is carried out in part by coordinating wreath laying ceremonies on the second Saturday of December at Arlington, as well as veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond. We also organize a week of events including international veteran's tributes, ceremonies at State Houses and a week-long "Veteran's Parade" between Maine and Virginia where we stop along the way to spread our message about the importance of remembering our fallen heroes, honoring those who serve, and teaching our children about the sacrifices made by veterans and their families to preserve our freedoms. To find a location in Wisconsin to participate in a Wreath Laying Ceremony click [HERE](#).



Survivor Outreach Services (SOS)

SOS was created to embrace and reassure Survivors that they are continually linked to the Army Family through a unified support program that enables them to remain an important part of the Army for as long as they desire. The SOS program continuously strives to provide the highest quality of services to Surviving Family members of Fallen Warriors. As such, we want to provide you with information on the SOS program in your area. We stand ready to serve you and answer your questions. Do you Facebook? Looking for more SOS connection? Click [here](#) for National SOS Facebook Page.

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**Never Forgotten
Never Alone**

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