**:** Choosing You at Holiday time…

During the February holiday season of love, our senses are bombarded with chocolate, flowers and the suggestions to share the love, treat someone to something special, Let’s celebrate love, make their day with (fill in the blank) chocolate, flowers, diamonds.

While these advertisements are helpful reminders to the general consumer, the griever usually finds the season of love difficult to anticipate and maneuver through, is possibly overwhelmed and has replaced the joy of the holiday with pain. The pain of their grief does not allow them to possess the emotion, the energy or the desire to observe or honor these celebrations.

Grief creates an unfamiliar microcosm of life for the bereaved. It produces a world of indecision and lack of control. Grief clouds one’s ability to recognize that they have the opportunity and can choose how to act, react, think, feel and behave. But the awareness of recognizing one’s available choices is the first step in beginning to see life in a new way. This awareness is the first step in the process of acceptance and assimilation of the new life of living with loss.

In regards to the holidays you can:

* Choose to ignore the holidays
* Choose to honor the memory of your loved one and celebrate with surviving loved ones
* Choose to accept your holidays will never be the same without your deceased loved one
* Choose to focus on THIS holiday not past or future holidays to stay in the moment and avoid further pain of the unknown
* Choose to remember past holidays and create new rituals out of the remembrance of them
* Choose to talk about your loved one (to feel closer to your loved one, to verify that others have not forgotten them and to keep the deceased present in your lives
* Choose to discuss with your family/friends what you’d like to do or not do to celebrate based on your present feelings.

This list demonstrates *how much* power the griever has in their grief regardless of *where* they might be in their journey. Because choices are grounded in one’s perspective, if you think you have no control in your life, you won’t. If you think you are paralyzed in your process, you will be. But the reality is, you have much power in the decisions of your life. And, with each decision you make, you build on the recognition of your power returning to your life.

Commercials also say”I would do anything for love” but would you do anything for yourself? In grief we tend to forget about ourselves due to being so overwhelmed by the process.

Remember, we all hear that grief is a personal journey and not a timed event. We hear about the hills and valleys of the terrain of grief but do not hear that it is also an evolvement of becoming a different you. The evolvement results from allowing yourself to feel the feelings, experience the experiences and being aware of the learning from each step. Being aware of YOU in the evolvement is crucial.

So be kind to yourself. While rebuilding you, you may encounter much unfamiliar territory. Be gentle with yourself this month and make this the beginning of finding the love in you with awareness and appreciation. Treat yourself to something special. Make your day by choosing you….

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