

# Meet the Challenge of the Spring Holidays

CHANGE – that’s what the grieving process is all about. We hope you go through that process in a way where you grow, renew, and heal. Spring-time offers many opportunities to address the matter of change. After all, it is the season of growth, renewal, and awakening. The cycles of life are never easier to witness than in the Spring.

**Days of rebirth.** — Several Spring holidays and other observances have strong themes of rebirth, which can take on meaning for you this year: Arbor Day, Earth Day, May Day, and celebrations like the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C.

Those who are grieving often plant flowers or trees at this time of year. It can be a private memorial, in your own garden or yard. Indeed, this year, you can make your whole garden a memorial garden. Or you can make it very public, complete with a commemorative plaque, in a park or other significant location.

This can be a way to, at least symbolically, keep a living, growing presence of your loved one. Trees and perennial flowers carry beyond this

Spring as well. They will be living, growing remembrances as the years pass.

That leads to Easter and Passover, major holidays that not only embrace rebirth but family. Reflect back on their meaning again.

**Days of family.** — Spring and early Summer is a stretch of the calendar with a great concentration of family-oriented holidays, all with



possible emotional triggers. Not only is there Easter and Passover, which just passed, but Cinco de Mayo, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July.

Think about these days in advance. How can you prepare yourself so that these important dates become positive experiences in your

grieving? What did you do on those dates in past years? And how can you observe them so they will create meaningful remembrances? This is, of course, a strategy you can use throughout the year in advance of significant days on the calendar — not only the holidays, but birthdays and anniversaries as well.

Was the loved one you lost your child? Your spouse or partner involved in raising children? Your parent or grandparent? Then, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day may prove to be emotionally charged.

**Something everyday.** — Last, you might be one of those who do something every year at this time — Spring Cleaning. You can turn this into a powerful opportunity. This year, you can literally sort through memories, quietly arranging and ordering your life. ■



## Grieve Not

What though the radiance which  
was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass,  
of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be;  
In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering;  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

— William Wordsworth

- ❖ **Activity** that gets you off of the couch and, especially with a dog that needs walking, out of the house.
- ❖ **Routine**, which can help grieving or depression by moving you forward.
- ❖ **Companionship** that breaks the isolation bereavement can create. It’s not just with your pet. Often, having a pet promotes social interaction with other pet owners you meet.
- ❖ **Touch**, which studies show can promote healing and calm you.

If you own a pet now, recognize how it can help you. If you don’t own a pet, but have been considering it, it may be a good time. But if that seems too big a step, or isn’t practical, you can volunteer at a nearby animal shelter. ■

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