

## Consider the Candle Ceremony

FIVE CANDLES form the heart of the holiday ceremony Sherry L. Williams created in 1985. Each candle recalls and honors your loved one, symbolizing . . .

- ❖ grief,
- ❖ courage,
- ❖ love,
- ❖ hope, and
- ❖ memories.

### *Include the kids.* —

The candle ceremony works very well with children because it's simple, it's clear, and it's powerful. Even kids who are too young to light candles themselves can take an active role.

### *Adapting the ceremony.* —

Williams created the ceremony as a one-day, annual holiday observance. You might adapt it. Each day (choosing whenever you wish to start), light a single candle, carrying you beyond the holidays. Each candle stands for one symbol. As you get beyond five candles,

choose new symbols or meanings.

After Christmas or New Year's, move to a candle each week. With Spring, perhaps shift to monthly.



Over the year, there are many anniversaries — first birthdays without your loved one, first wedding anniversary, first anniversaries of less formal events.

The candle ceremony can help you through the

whole next calendar year. On those days, burn a special candle.

After the year, or two, you can do it annually or on a few most significant dates on the calendar.

### *Exploring the meanings.* —

Every candle will be unique. The brightness of the flame will vary. The scent you choose may differ. Each day, you

may focus more on one symbol, one aspect, one recollection. However, the candle's light will always stand for your loved one's memory.

### *Exploring your emotions.* —

As you watch the flame, find joy. Don't dwell on sadness. Recall the laughter, the happiness. It's common when grieving to feel guilt if you find something funny or begin to laugh. Allow yourself to balance your grief with joy. The life you shared with your loved one included many happy times.

Permit yourself to express a range of emotions. In the flame, recall times when you laughed, times when you cried, times of anger, times of silliness.

In your grief, the candle can cast a light on all the memories, helping you to recognize that every moment of your loved one's life, every moment of your life, is precious. Let the candles each serve to build a lasting memorial in your thoughts. ■

## Greetings of the Season

ALL THOSE HOLIDAY GREETINGS. They're so much a part of the season that, usually, you don't even think about them. This time around is different. This year, how do you respond to "Merry Christmas," "Happy Holidays," and "Happy New Year" when you're anything but merry or happy?

Remember these lines aren't meant to prompt deep dialogue. They're stock phrases. So take a bit of time beforehand to consider how you will reply to these cheerful greetings. You don't need to fake

it, but find appropriate replies you're comfortable with.

If a stranger or casual acquaintance greets you, just say, "Thanks, happy holidays to you." To those you know well who know you're grieving, you can say, "I'm trying." It's an opening for a quick exchange or for them to reply with condolences or sympathy. ■



## Prayer for the New Year

May God make your year a happy one!  
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,  
But by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;  
Not by making your path easy,  
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;  
Not by taking hardships from you,  
But by taking fear from your heart;  
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,  
But by keeping your face bright,  
even in the shadows;  
Not by making your life always pleasant,  
But by showing you when people and their  
causes need you most,  
and by helping you become available to help.  
God's love, peace, hope and joy to you  
for the year ahead.

— Anonymous