

REWRITING THE HOLIDAYS after loss WORKBOOK



what's
your
grief?

WHAT'S YOUR GRIEF



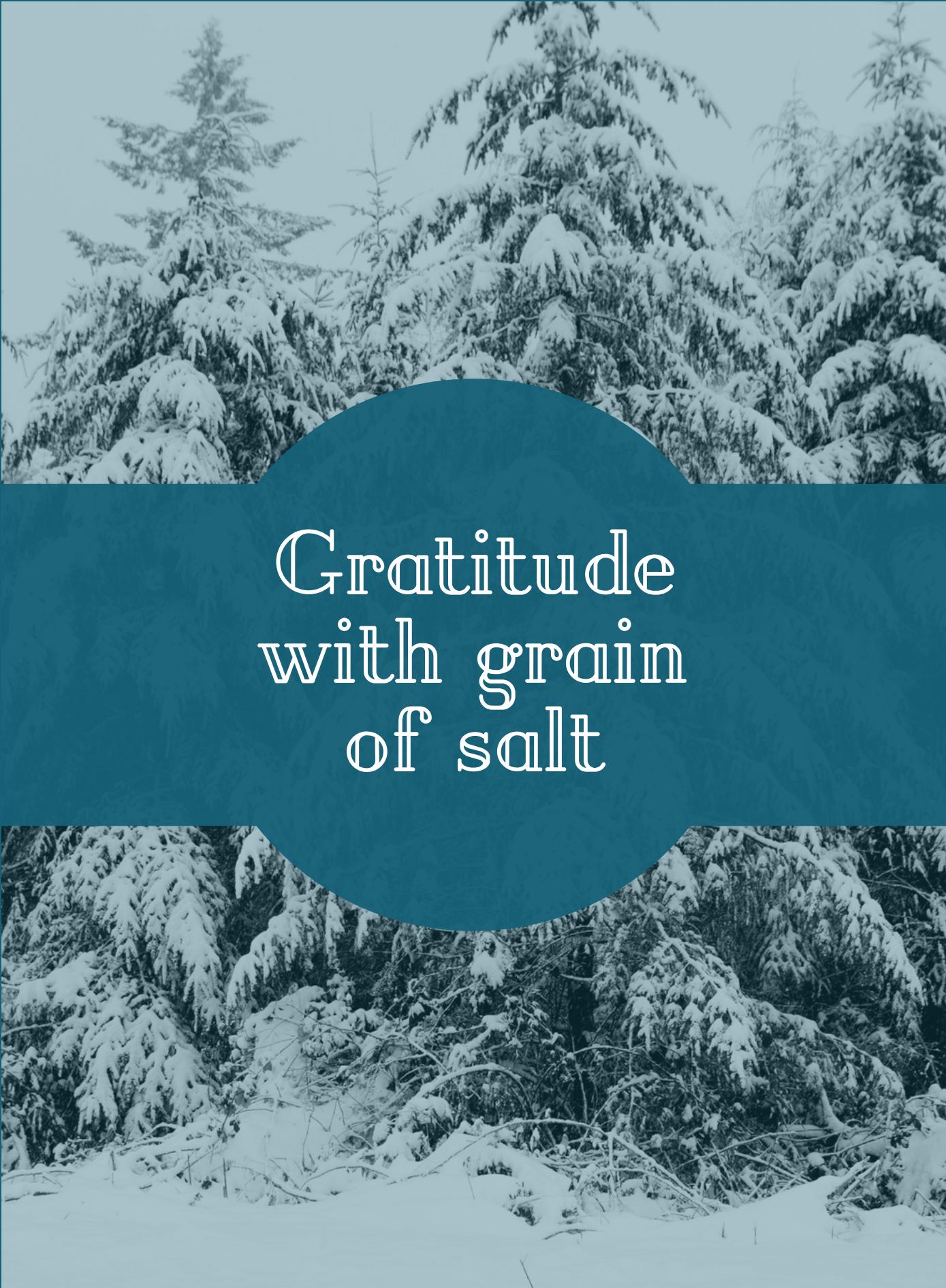
WELCOME

After someone you love dies, life feels forever altered. In the weeks and months following a death, even the most mundane days can feel overwhelming—let alone finding the strength to face special days and holidays. Often, the holidays are never the same again. Traditions, events, parties, songs, and movies—things you once enjoyed—can become triggers for sadness and emotion.

If you're wondering how you'll navigate the upcoming holidays without your loved one, we recommend setting intentions, communicating, staying flexible, and reminding yourself that it's okay to take breaks or even opt out. No matter what you choose to do, there's no way to avoid the pain and sadness entirely. However, by reflecting on the aspects that will be most challenging for you, the strengths and resources you can draw on, and your core values, you can approach the season with intention and care.

The holidays after a loss are bound to be messy and imperfect. But then again, life itself is messy and imperfect! We hope this workbook gives you a starting point for facing a particularly tricky time of year.

what's your grief



Gratitude with grain of salt

Words that were once benign can feel
challenging in grief.

If “I’m grateful for” is too hard,
try “I have . . .”

“

“Glimmers are the small moments that
cue a sense of safety and calm in us
when we take the time to notice them.”

-Deb Dana, LCSW

Savoring is truly noticing and enjoying positive
moments as they happen and being aware of the
good feelings they bring.

“

“It was sunsets that taught me that
beauty sometimes only lasts for couple
of moments . . .”

-A.J. Lawless

Going into the holiday season

I have....

I have...

I have...

I have....

Language After Loss

Reflect on holiday language that you know activates feelings of pain, agitation, or shutdown for you. Are there other words that feel more accessible or relatable for you during this holiday season?

joy merry cheer  warmth rest calm

Glimmers & Savoring

People who help me feel calm, safe, happy, or supported

-
-
-

Places that help me feel peaceful, calm, or inspired

-
-
-

Things I want to be mindful to notice and savor in the coming holiday months

-
-
-

I'm appreciative that my body will allow me to

-
-
-

Some glimmers I noticed this week were

-
-
-

I feel grief and joy living side by side when

-
-
-

Something I want more of in my life during the holiday season is

-
-
-

5 Ways to Notice

1

Keep a journal and write in it daily to remind yourself of the glimmers and moments you want to savor from your day, no matter how small.

Note the painful challenging moments in your day. What strengths did you lean on to get through them?

2

3

Use your senses and appreciate being able to touch, see, smell, taste, and hear the many sights and smells of the holidays.

Approximately 1 in 4 adults are either very or fairly lonely (with young adults being the most lonely). Notice strangers and make a point to say hello or pay a compliment.

4

5

Each week, take a few minutes to reflect on the moments you never thought you'd survive in those early days of grief.

©MCampbell2022

Noticing

One thing that made me smile today

One person for whom I am appreciative

One thing I did to care for myself today

One thing I am looking forward to, however small

One thing I took for granted this week that I want to savor

One thing I will do to be kind to myself tomorrow



Holiday Values



Holiday Values

The holidays may look very different after a loss—whether by choice or circumstance. Still, it's possible to stay connected to the why of the season, even if the when, where, what, who, and how have changed. Take a moment to write down three holiday values you hope to connect with this year. Beneath each value, jot down some ideas for how you might honor or embody it.

(some common holiday values are listed in the left-hand column)

VALUES >

Family

Generosity

Faith

Togetherness

Giving

Remembrance

Reconnection

Home

Friendship

Gratitude

Community

Service

Legacy

Comfort

Values

If traditional holiday values don't resonate this year, consider the values you associate with your loved one. Are there any you'd like to connect with during this holiday season?

What were the values your loved one most embodied and appreciated?

Are there any ways you would like to put those values in the world during the holiday season?



Self-Care & Self-Compassion

Grief at the Holidays Pact

- I acknowledge that I have the right to mourn.
- I recognize that I have the right to feel what I feel.
- I accept that I have the right to decide how I want to spend the holidays.
- I will do my best to communicate my feelings, expectations, and needs.
- I will minimize negative coping.
- I will extend the same care and compassion to myself as others.
- I will be mindful of my outlook.
- I give myself permission to find warmth and joy where I can.

Your Grief at the Holidays Pact

Write your own holiday self-care and self-compassion pact, with whatever reminders you think you might need.

Holiday Boundaries

holiday boundaries can sound like

I'm happy to host this year, but I'm not going to cook or take menu requests. I'll be buying everything pre-made.

I'd love to come by, but I can only stay for 45 min.

Thank you so much for the invitation, but I'm not up for it this year.

We've decided not to have alcohol this year for the holidays and ask that no one brings any. We'll have plenty of great food and non-alcoholic drinks.

make your own



Focusing on What's Within Your Control

WHAT I CAN CONTROL	WHAT I CAN'T CONTROL

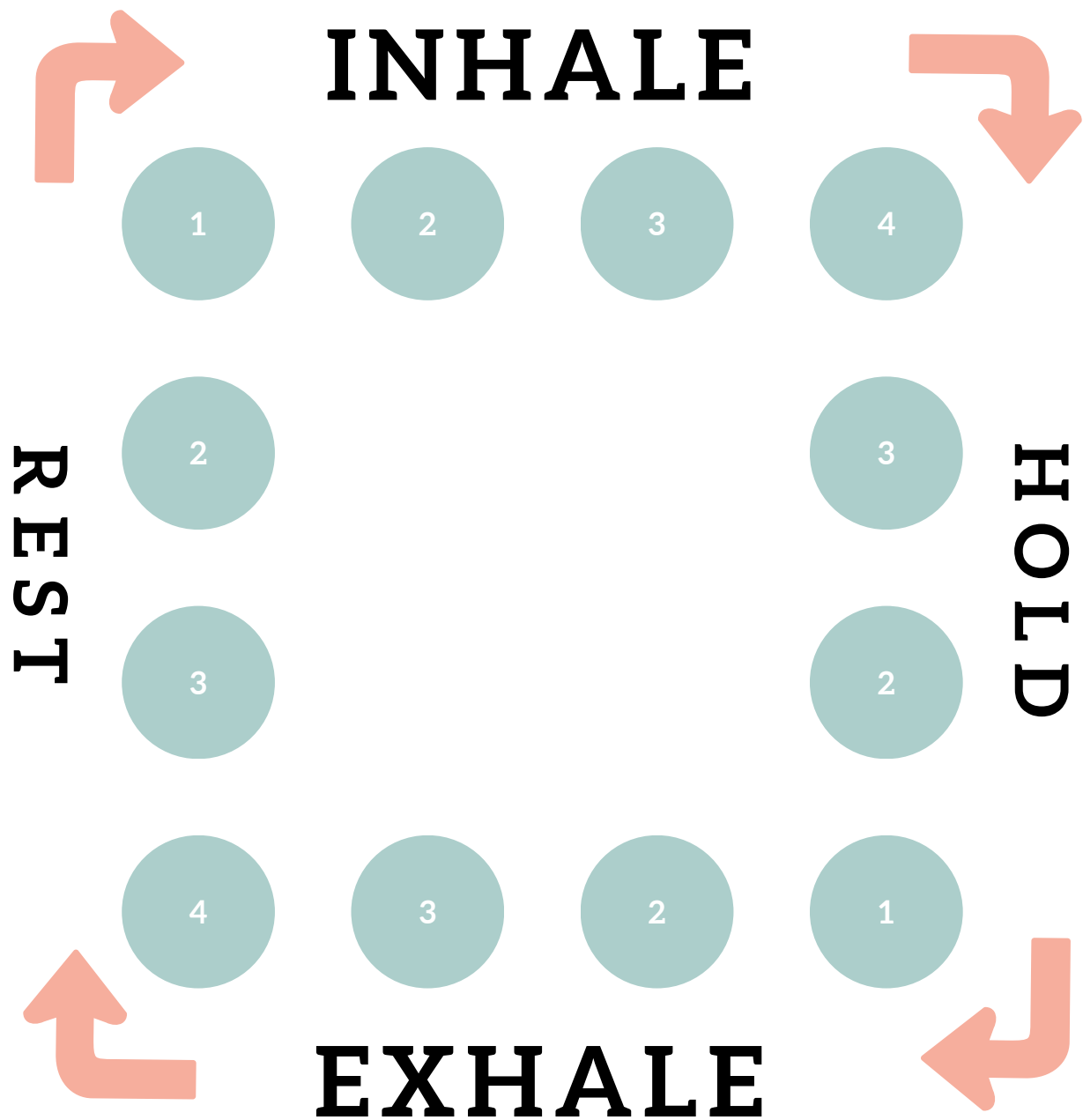
Survivor Guilt

Think about any survivor guilt you have about finding moments of joy, comfort, or peace during the holiday season.

Write yourself a letter from the person you've lost about that guilt. Would they understand it? Would they relate to it? How would they suggest you live with and cope with the guilt?

A large grid of dots for writing a letter. The grid consists of 20 columns and 25 rows of small, light blue dots, providing a guide for letter height and placement.

Box Breathing



Grounding

when it is all feeling like a lot

LOOK

Look around you for 5 things that you can see, and say them out loud.

5

LOOK



FEEL

Focus on your body and choose 4 things that you can feel; say them out loud.

4

FEEL



LISTEN

Listen for 3 sounds. Say the three sounds out loud.

3

LISTEN



SMELL

Say two things you can smell.

2

SMELL



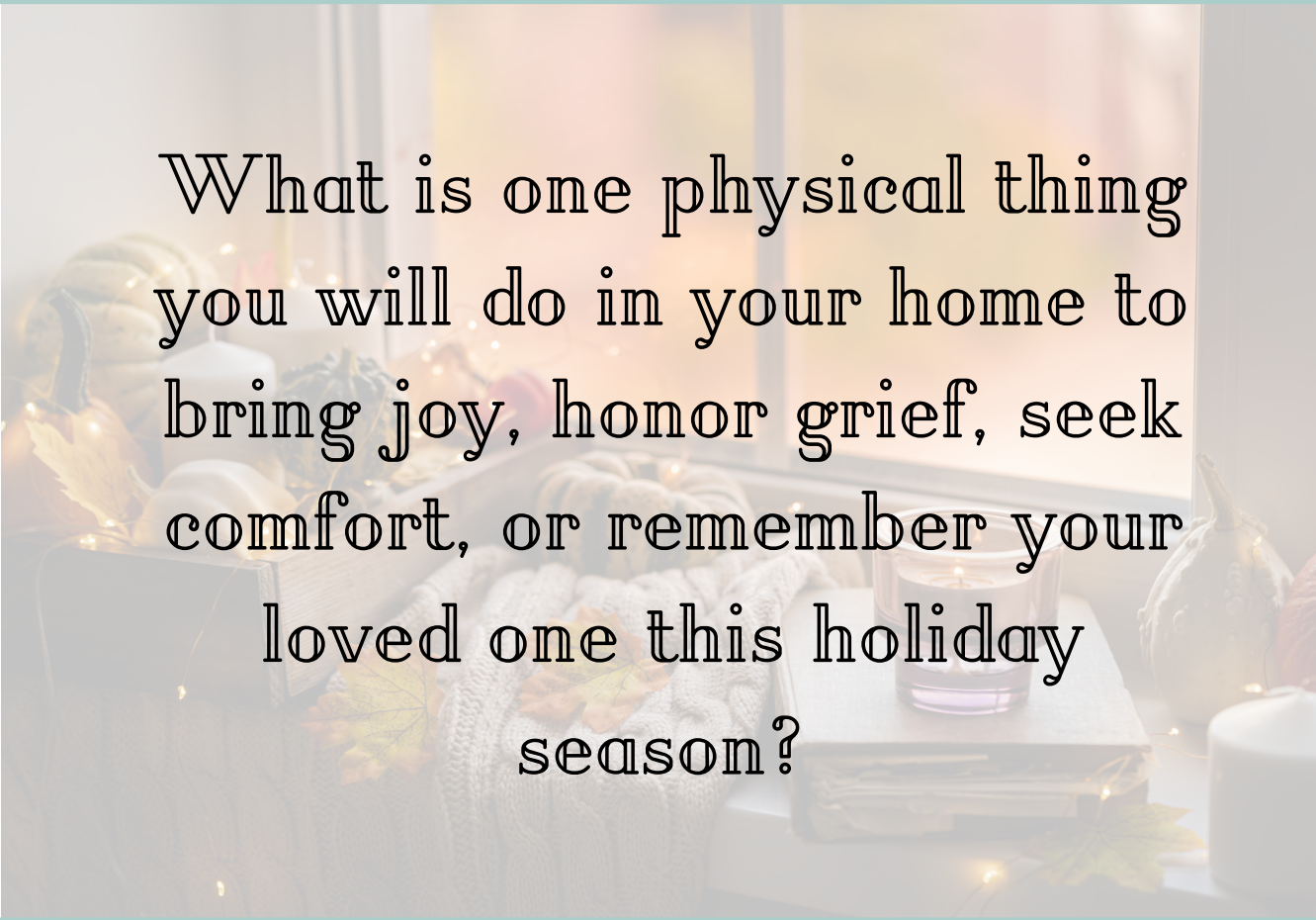
TASTE

Say one thing you can taste.

1

TASTE



A warm, autumn-themed still life featuring pumpkins, a lit candle in a glass holder, and soft, glowing lights. The scene is set on a wooden surface, possibly a table or mantel, with a window in the background showing a warm, orange glow. The overall atmosphere is cozy and reflective.

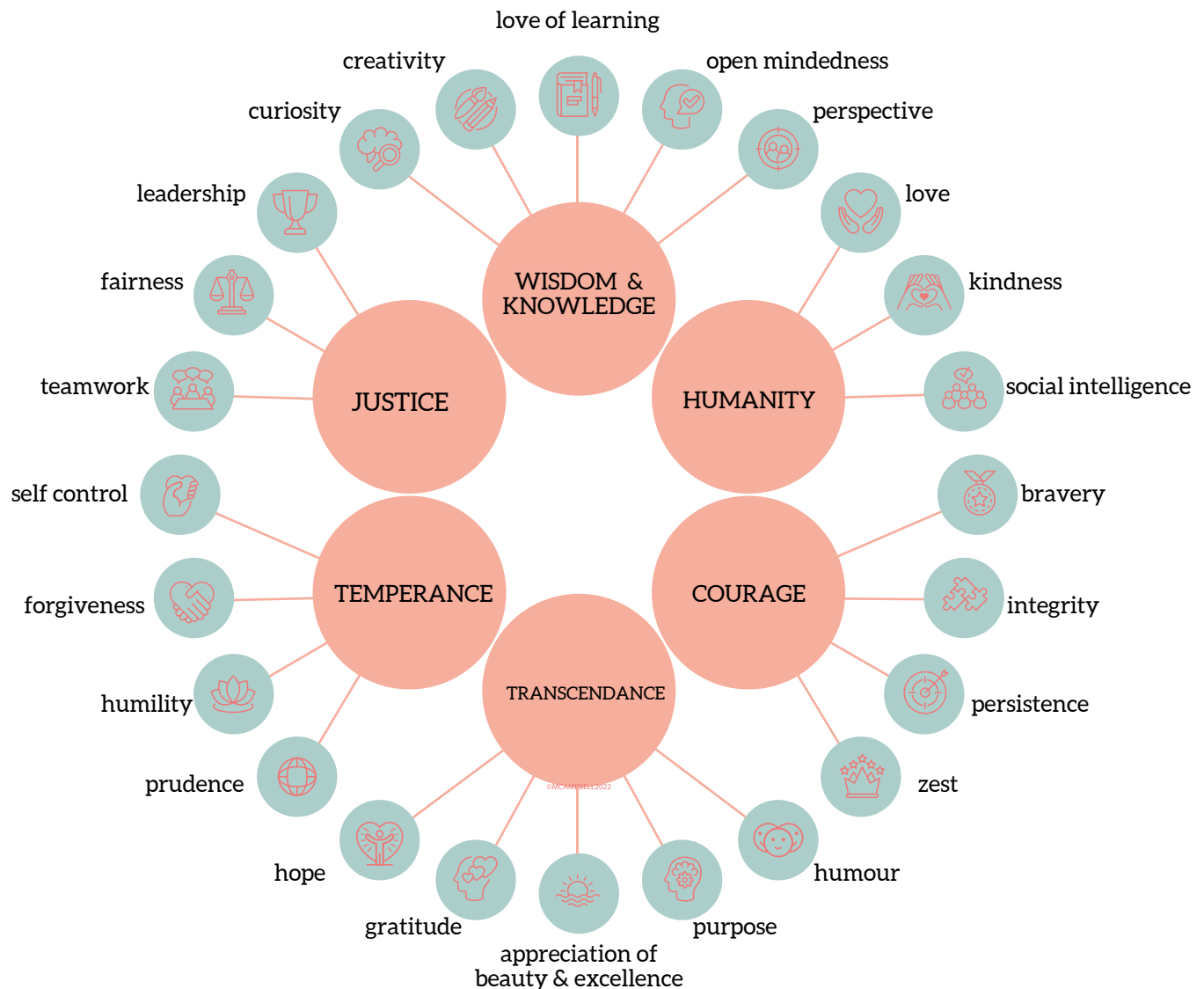
What is one physical thing
you will do in your home to
bring joy, honor grief, seek
comfort, or remember your
loved one this holiday
season?



Use Your Strengths

Your Virtues & Strengths

Positive psychology researchers Peterman and Seligman have discovered that we all possess certain character strengths. When we become consciously aware of these strengths and intentionally use them during challenging times, we tend to experience greater well-being and less depression, even in the midst of grief and trauma. The character strengths are listed in the outer circle of the diagram below. Take a moment to identify your key strengths and record them in the table.



MY KEY VIRTUES AND STRENGTHS:

Appreciating Your Strengths

Going into the holiday season after a loss, it can be easy to focus on what we don't have: the people who are gone, the traditions that have to change, the energy that has vanished. But Peterson & Seligman's research finds our strengths are always with us, even when they are far below the surface. As you face the holiday season, consider the following:

What is one thing you've done since your loss that was incredibly difficult, so much so that you weren't sure you'd be able to do it?

What strengths did you lean on to get it done or get through it?

What is one thing you've done to care for yourself in your grief? What strengths helped you to do this?

What is one thing you've done to care for someone else in your grief? What strengths helped you to do this?

Leaning On Your Strengths

To support yourself and spark ideas for using your strengths during the holiday season and into the new year, consider the following areas. For each one, identify a strength you possess and how you can rely on it throughout the holidays.

when I'm with my
family & friends

when I'm at work

when I'm asking for
help

when deciding what
events to attend

when setting limits
and boundaries

when feeling
overwhelmed by grief

when I'm feeling lonely

when I'm connecting
with ritual and tradition

when I change my
mind about what I
want or need



People & Remembrance

Connecting

Make a list of the people you might want (or need) to discuss the holidays with. Who is a part of your traditions, events, and gatherings? List those people. Don't worry about whether you'll ultimately reach out to them,

What is one way you could ask for help or support this holiday season?

Is there anyone you have lost touch with, miss, and would like to reconnect with this holiday season, no matter how long it has been?

What is one act of kindness or giving you'd like to do for someone else this holiday season?

Holiday Continuing Bonds Ideas

- Fill their stocking with gifts they would have liked and then donating them.
- Create a memory space in their honor, either a physical spot in your home, a virtual space online, or set a spot at the holiday table.
- Donate to a charity or scholarship in their name.
- Make a recipe they loved or one they used to make
- Serve their favorite drink.
- Invite your family and friends to a holiday potluck. Ask guests to make a dish that your loved one liked.
- Volunteer with a cause they cared about.
- Visit a place they always wanted to see
- Create a memorial ornament
- Make a quilt or teddy bears from their shirts.
- Share some of their belongings as gifts, along with the stories behind them.
- Light a candle in their memory.
- Have a moment of silence for them before dinner.
- Make a toast in their memory.
- Invite guests to share a memory.
- Buy a gift you would have given to your loved one, and either donate it to a local charity or gift it to a friend or family member.
- If the budget allows, adopt a family in their memory from a local shelter or DSS.
- Give yourself a gift you think they may have given you.
- If you have been having a hard time parting with your loved one's clothing, use the holidays as an opportunity to donate some items to a homeless shelter or other charity.
- Make a playlist of songs they loved (holiday or otherwise!)
- Have a movie marathon with your loved one's favorite holiday movies.

Something I
will do to feel
close to my
loved one this
holiday
season is . . .



Ignore the Holidays and Put Kindness in the World Instead Ideas

- Clear weeds and plant flowers in a neglected public place.
- Leave the exact change for a snack in the change slot of a vending machine.
- Take a box of biscuits to your local firehouse or police station.
- Forgive someone a debt that they owe you if they can't pay it.
- When you're finished reading a great book, leave it in a public place for someone else to find.
- Over-tip a waiter or give the pizza delivery person a really large tip.
- Drop coins on the street for someone else to find.
- Give a tip to a street musician.
- Visit a nursing home and help brighten the day of an elderly person who doesn't get many visitors.
- Help an elderly person with their garden.
- Prepare a meal for a friend.
- Let someone who appears to be in a hurry cut ahead of you in line.
- Take a friend out to lunch and listen to them.
- Give your spare laptop to an elderly person who you know is home-bound.
- Leave small scraps of paper with positive messages on them in library books.
- Purchase a couple of extra bags of dog food and drop them off at a local animal shelter.
- Do a chore for someone else in your family.
- Donate hygiene items to local women's shelter.
- Bake cookies for your postman/postwoman.
- Invite someone who's alone to have dinner with your family for the holidays.
- Let another car merge in front of you.
- Give someone a compliment.
- Help out at a soup kitchen.
- Offer busy parents to babysit their kids so they can have some alone time.
- Buy extra groceries and drop them off at a local food bank.
- Donate craft supplies to a school in need.



My hope for myself this
holiday season is . . .

VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT

<https://whatsyourgrief.com>

JOIN OUR PRIVATE GRIEF SUPPORT COMMUNITY AT

<https://whatsyourgrief.com/online-grief-community>



PICK UP OUR BOOK
WHEREVER YOU BUY BOOKS

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL

[@WHATSYOURGRIEF](https://www.instagram.com/whatsyourgrief)