



The Companion

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IT'S VACATION TIME . . . wait . . . oh, crap, it's vacation time!

Many survivors of suicide loss struggle this time of year with the whole idea of taking a vacation. When grief is new, raw or especially traumatic, it is sometimes difficult to give yourself a break and take time away to enjoy the summer days of July and August.

I have had people ask me whether they should go ahead with vacation plans or cancel and stay home. Many are seeking permission, as some people are concerned whether they should have moments of joy. This may lead to judgment from others and moments of intense guilt. Others have shared that getting away made them realize how tough things really are, and they were forced to recognize that their grief is still a huge part of their day to day life.

We may experience fear in leaving the safety of our homes, where we can shut out the world. But we may also experience joy in being somewhere other than home that brought great joy to our loved ones. There is no right or wrong answer here. Each of us needs to do what we need to do in order to get through each day. However, here are some strategies that may be helpful as you start to plan your vacation or time away.



1. Give yourself a break - remember previous vacations - not all your plans worked out, were stress free or without adjustments. Changes to plans are not always a bad thing.
2. Let those you are vacationing with know you may have moments where you want to be alone, meditate, read, or just close your eyes and relax. Yes, you may cry, smile, laugh; but communicating and setting these expectations with others is important for you and for them.
3. Plan, plan, plan (if you must) - but expect the unexpected, so plan for that as well. Some people like to fill their agenda each day with must do's and must see's. Then, when something does not go as planned, it feels like you have lost control again. Just plan for the unexpected. Allow for some downtime. Remember how you plan for an "outside" day and then it rains - it's the same - what will you do if you can't do what you planned to do?

4. Remember, grief does not take a vacation. You cannot leave it home. It is very important to be realistic about what a vacation can achieve and what it cannot. Grief will not suddenly disappear once you leave your home. You will pack your grief in your suitcase and take it right along with you. Being prepared that it will be your companion will help you deal with it when it starts screaming for your attention.

5. Anticipation - oh, when we have talked about something often, a lot of anxiety is created in our heads. Many times, the anticipation of an event is more intense than the actual event. Remember, it's okay to enjoy yourself.

Whether you leave town or remain home for a "staycation", it's important to take time for yourself. Grief takes its toll - physically, mentally and emotionally. There's no quick fix, easy answers or perfect solutions. We do the best we can. That's true for vacations, just as it is true for everyday life, especially when you are grieving. So, be kind to yourself and enjoy some summer moments - you are allowed.

(Jeanette's version of "No One Told Me About Vacations" by Judy Kaplan, Comforting Friends, June-July 2015)

Peace and Love my Friends, Jeanette

	<u>People to Remember</u>	<u>WE OFFER SUPPORT</u>	<u>UPCOMING EVENTS</u>
	<p>ETERNAL REST: Brandon – July 15th Nick – July 22nd Jacob – July 22nd Justin – July 22nd Nathan – July 28th Tanner – August 2nd Joe – August 13th Bruce – August 25th Danil – August 27th Jackson – August 31st</p>	<p>General support meetings: 3rd Thursday of the month July 16th & August 20th</p> <p>Sibling support meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month July 8th & August 12th</p> <p>Support groups meet from 6:00-8:00 p.m. at 211 E. Franklin Street, Suite F, Appleton, WI</p>	<p>September 3rd: Butterfly Release at Greenville Park, starts at 6:00 p.m.</p> <p>November 7th: Save the date for the Starlite Club Fundraiser which is still being planned at this time.</p> <p>Volunteer Opportunities:</p> <p>August 6th: 50/50 Fundraiser at WIR.</p> <p>September 11th: 50/50 Fundraiser at WIR Eve of Destruction Event.</p>