

Father's Day

By Chuck DeKlyen

This month families all over will be gathering to celebrate Fathers Day. Families might meet for a BBQ, maybe go camping or even just pay a visit to spend time with their fathers. For many of us lucky enough to still have our fathers in our life this can seem like just another commercial holiday. But what about those whose father is no longer with them? Father's Day can be just another cruel reminder of their loss.

The loss of a father can be a devastating blow to any family and the holiday to honor him only gives your family one more day to realize how much you miss him. Many have found sharing memories of their father with other family members and close friends is a helpful way to assist their own grieving process. Taking the time to reflect with others, even though this might be painful, allows us to share and process the grief that we are feeling. If your family is gathering this year and you have experienced the loss of a father try this constructive idea. Have the whole family create a memory box in honor of Dad.

Some creative ideas for remembering...

** Compile those memories! What were your first memories of your father? What are you grateful for? Ask your siblings or others for their input. Write them down.*

** Write a letter to your dad. Maybe recall a favorite time or a life lesson they left you with. Include the good and the bad. Fathers have a way of leaving a lasting impression on us!*

** Invite all members of the family to share their memories. Be sure to include the children and grandchildren so they can form their own memories of your family.*

** Create a personalized photo album in memory of your father. Family photos can help us remember and reflect when we are feeling down.*

** Make a memory box so that you have a safe place to keep all these memories. This special box can be pulled out and cherished year round on birthdays, family occasions and as younger family members grow up.*

If your family has not experienced an immediate loss, be mindful of those you know who have. Consider your friends or neighbors who might have lost a child or another member of their family too soon. It is a huge gesture for you to reach out to those you know who

may longer feel accepted or a part of this family holiday. There are many things that you can do to reach out to these individuals to make their day a little brighter.

If your friend is grieving...

** You can send a card, or make a call. A small connection can remind them that you are thinking of them. A small gesture to you, but for the bereaved it can change their day.*

** Invite your friend to a meal, or to join you for a cup of coffee. Go see a movie or take a walk. A simple distraction might be a nice break from their grief. Just a temporary change of scenery might be helpful to your friend.*

** Be a source of comfort by listening, laughing, and crying.*

** Avoid offering easy answers and platitudes. This only invalidates grief. Be patient. Don't try to rush your friend through their grief.*

** Be mindful of your friend and their emotions. They might not feel like hanging out or having visitors. Be respectful of their mood and understanding if they want to take a rain check on your offers. Being alone on Father's Day with their memories might be just what they need.*

Father's Day can be a special day for celebrating and remembering our father, whether he is living or not. Take advantage of the day! It is my hope that you have the opportunity this year to use the holiday to take care of yourself and those around you, both immediate family and close friends.