



Information and Support for Anniversaries

As the 7th of February 2010 approaches many people will be reflecting on the loss, grief, trauma and devastation caused by the fires on that day in 2009.

Anniversaries and reminders can evoke powerful memories and feelings that are very personal. Often the anticipation of an anniversary is more difficult and painful than the day itself.

“It is the lead up to the anniversary that is the hardest. I was expecting it to be worse on the day than it really was. I worried so much about what it would be like, that when the day came it was almost a relief that it was the day, and that the first year would have passed.” (Merna, whose daughter, Chrissie died in the Bali bombing).

Some people may attend community memorials, others will choose to spend time with family and friends. For others it may be important to spend the day alone.

Having a plan and discussing your wishes with others can assist in making a tough time more bearable. While you may have made a plan, when the day dawns, you may feel you cannot participate in that way. So listen to your own feelings and make changes which you will feel comfortable with.

The important thing is to think about what this event means to you and then how you want to manage it.

If your decision is not to mark the day be aware you may still experience reactions such as sadness even despair and you possibly may feel tired and lethargic. So it would be good to have an arrangement with a family member or a friend to contact them if you need some support.

It is good to remember that everyone around you may have different feelings to you and may choose different approaches to you. So understand that this is an individual response and that there is no right or wrong way.

Don't set too high expectations for yourself or other family members.

Each relationship and bereavement is unique and special. The reminders may raise feelings of sadness, grief, fear, regrets and sometimes anger. They can also bring fond and happy memories and these may be comforting.

Things that may assist you to plan.

- Don't set too high expectations for yourself and other family members
- Consider being involved in a community event
- Visit the cemetery or a special place you shared together
- Have your own memorial with family and or friends. Have photos and mementos around
- Be creative through writing, art and music. Playing your loved one's favourite music can be comforting
- Be prepared to make compromises
- Your family and friends will want to know you are safe on this day

Remember to take care of yourself. Being able to do things you enjoy can help you to maintain a balance with the sadness and difficult, stressful emotions of the day.

Remember that sadness and happiness don't cancel each other out and can exist alongside each other.

Listen to your body. When you feel tired find a comfortable place to rest, this might be at home or in another restful place outdoors.

“In that first year I was always focused on what we would have been doing together a year ago. As times goes on, you don't think of the immediate past so much, but focus more on the memories.

When you are less focused on the event, the good memories flow back more easily. And it can be at times when you aren't expecting it, and it is lovely when it just happens.” (Merna)