

For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died

TAPS®

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

TAPS MAGAZINE | WINTER 2022



WHAT'S INSIDE: FINDING MY WINTER WELLNESS

RE-CREATING HOLIDAY TRADITIONS ★ HEALING YOUR HOLIDAY GRIEF

Four Candles

The first candle represents our grief.
The pain of losing you is intense.
It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.

This second candle represents our courage.
To confront our sorrow,
To comfort each other,
To change our lives.

This third candle we light in your memory.
For the times we laughed,
The times we cried,
The times we were angry with each other,
The silly things you did,
The caring and joy you gave us.

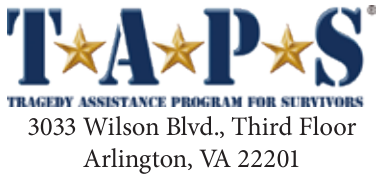
This fourth candle we light for our love.
We light this candle that your light
will always shine.
As we enter this holiday season and
share this night of remembrance
with our family and friends.

We cherish the special place in our hearts
that will always be reserved for you.
We thank you for the gift
your living brought to each of us.

We love you.

We remember you.





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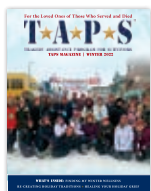
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BRING HOPE TO SURVIVORS**

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TAPS PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- ★ 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline
 - ★ Peer-Based Support Network
 - ★ Survivor Care Team
- ★ Community-Based Care Connection
 - ★ Casework & Benefits Assistance
 - ★ Suicide & Illness Loss Support
 - ★ Grief & Trauma Resources
 - ★ Education Support Services
- ★ TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®
 - ★ Online Community
 - ★ Care Groups
- ★ Regional & National Seminars
- ★ TAPS Togethers (One-Day Gatherings)
 - ★ Women's Empowerment
 - ★ Men's Program
 - ★ Young Adults Program
- ★ Youth Programs: Good Grief Camps
 - ★ Family Camps
 - ★ College Experience Program
 - ★ Sports & Entertainment Events
- ★ Publications: Magazines, Newsletters, & Blogs



ON THE COVER

Survivors attending the TAPS Alaska Survivor Experience gather at the starting point for the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race in Anchorage, AK.

PHOTO: TAPS ARCHIVES

ABOUT TAPS

Caring for the Families of America's Fallen Heroes

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, we are a family of military survivors ready to embrace and connect all who grieve the death of a military loved one with resources, services, and programs. TAPS provides support to survivors regardless of the manner of death, the duty status at the time of death, the survivor's relationship to the deceased, or the survivor's phase in their grief journey. At TAPS, we open our hearts and resources to the world with our award-winning programs and services to support all military bereaved. TAPS is fortunate to work with leading experts in the fields of grief, bereavement, trauma, and peer support to integrate decades of research on military grief into action to help heal hearts.

At TAPS, we:

Honor and Remember: We cherish the lives of our military loved ones and celebrate military survivors as the living legacies of their service and sacrifice.

Empower: We empower survivors with healthy coping skills, resources, and opportunities to connect in the comfort of their home, their community, their region, and the nation to grow with their grief.

Connect: We connect all those grieving a military death 24/7 to a nationwide network of peer-based, emotional survivor support and critical casework assistance.

Educate: We inform and educate using research-informed best practices in bereavement and trauma care for survivors and advocate on behalf of survivors with policy and legislative priorities.

Create Community: We build community with survivors to provide comprehensive comfort, care, and resources where they live, when they need it, and in a manner comfortable for them.

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TAPS exceeds industry standards for financial accountability and out performs most charities. We are proud to have received many of the top nonprofit charity ratings available today. Our donors should be confident they are supporting an organization that is financially healthy, accountable, and transparent.



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To Our TAPS Family,



As the holidays approach, we come together as a family to honor our loved ones and find comfort with each other. TAPS is our home for the holidays, our soft landing and safe space, our organization created to help us remember the love, celebrate the life, and share this journey together.

Whether this is your first holiday without your loved one, or it has been many years, we will forever remember and honor those we love, and hold them close in our hearts. We cherish traditions and create new memories. We light a candle in memory of those we love, and we take time to quietly honor the gifts they gave us.

This holiday season, reflect on the gifts we have been blessed to receive from those we love. Let's take a quiet moment to think about how you are now going to embrace the treasures they have given you — their love, humor, determination, grit, courage, strength, patriotism, purpose, and pride. These are gifts that don't come wrapped up with a bow; they aren't placed under a tree. They are gifts that are given heart to heart, and life to life, with love.

The lives of those we love, remember, and honor are etched not just into a granite marker at a gravesite, but carved into our souls, imprinted on our hearts and woven into the fabric of our nation. They enrich our lives; they make us stronger; they inspire us; and — in that way — they are eternal.

With love and hope this holiday season and always,

Bonnie Carroll ★ TAPS President and Founder



Dear TAPS...

SO GRATEFUL

I am so grateful for your help. I have no words to express my gratitude. It seems that TAPS has become like family to me, since losing my husband. He always took care of me, now TAPS does that. I only now realized how important such an organization is, how much such help is needed to survive the tragedy of losing a loved one. I am very grateful to TAPS and their employees who do not just do a job...everything comes from their hearts.

My husband and I had an unusual family because we were of different nationalities and now, the unusual story continues, with American TAPS now caring for me, a Ukrainian immigrant — now, U.S. citizen — who lost her U.S. Army veteran husband, and who found herself in a difficult situation due to ignorance of American laws, and simply not understanding of the English language. I didn't even ask TAPS to help me. I didn't know it was possible. Six months have passed since the death of my husband, and TAPS has not left my side.

Nina Mykhailova

Surviving Spouse of Richard Lee Young, Veteran, U.S. Army

PEER MENTOR

I applied for, and have been accepted to become a peer mentor with TAPS. I will attend training this fall. I am so honored. I just want to say thank you.

My son, Sammy, used to say to me that if he was ever able to overcome his PTSD and drug addiction that he wanted to become a social worker and dedicate his career to helping veterans. In some small way, I feel that this is an opportunity to help Sammy live his dream. The healing that I have experienced in this past year or so would NOT have been possible without

the help, love, and understanding from my TAPS family. I am humbled and grateful. I view becoming a TAPS Peer Mentor as an opportunity to give back — at least some of what I have received from this organization.

Scott McCutcheon

Surviving Father of Spc. Samuel Christopher McCutcheon, U.S. Army

INCREDIBLE RESOURCES

Though Jeff died in 2016, I found TAPS in May 2022 when my AGSM chapter's new president sent out information about what TAPS offers. I looked through it all and decided to apply for the Women's Empowerment Retreat in Sedona. Although I was put on the waitlist, someone must have gotten my name, because very soon, Erin Sellner, my Survivor Care Team support, called me and made a connection. After that, I received a very nice box from TAPS with so many incredible resources! Also, I virtually attended the Regional Seminar in San Antonio. Although I was too emotional to speak most of the time, I did use the chat feature on Zoom. The facilitators were wonderful! I also signed up for the TAPS Daily Reflection with Dr. Alan Wolfelt emails, and those are SO wonderful to wake up to each day.

I don't know if I found TAPS "just when I was supposed to," or if it's been long enough since Jeff's death that I was ready to continue on the grief journey — but TAPS is JUST what I need right now. I have been 'stuck' for a while, not knowing what my purpose is in life and what I am supposed to do now. TAPS can't bring Jeff back, but it is giving me tools to cope, grow, and look FORWARD. Thank you, TAPS and all your wonderful staff!!

Laura Braden

Surviving Mother of Capt. Jeffrey Braden, U.S. Air Force

LOOKING IN

Although not a participant, I felt compelled to share what I witnessed during the Men's Retreat in Montana in September, while supporting TAPS as a volunteer photographer.

I spent the vast majority of my career at Outward Bound, working there for 20 years, with the last 11 years working on a program designed for veterans. In that time, I have been a part of and/or witnessed some incredibly powerful and meaningful experiences for veteran participants that led to significant and positive changes in the lives of those veterans.

The depth of the experience that your team had to support the men that attended the Montana retreat was as powerful, though, (if not more so) than anything I have ever seen or been a part of.

The environment that the staff created was emotionally safe, a perfect balance of structure and downtime, and most importantly it was created with intention. This allowed men to feel safe, completely open themselves to the experience, and to unapologetically show each other (and in some cases, themselves) grace, support, compassion, and LOVE.

It was truly special.

In quiet conversations with men, one thing that really stood out to me was how alone and isolated many had felt in their grief before their trip to Montana. To me that speaks to the unique needs men may have in grief, and how TAPS is filling a void that no other organization out there is capable of filling for this population.

Thank you for the work you and your team do to support the families of those who have served, and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to witness it.

Chad Spangler

TAPS Volunteer



Visit taps.org/deartaps to submit your TAPS experience and share hope and encouragement with others.

Finding my WINTER WELLNESS

Rayanne Hunter ★ Surviving Spouse of U.S. Army SSG Wesley Hunter
TAPS Advisory Board Member

I love that feeling of fall shifting into winter! Cool mornings, crisp days, winter hats, scarves, and soon, snowboarding. The world is growing quiet and shimmering all over. Inviting us to move inward — to find that which makes us warm and cozy. Being from Colorado, the beautiful frost and snow encompassing everything is something that I enjoy.

I know there also comes a shadowy side to the winter season, especially when we are grieving. That weight — the quiet isolation, and potentially overwhelming holiday expectations can be difficult to find our way through, causing stress, anxiety, and depression.

As the temperatures drop and I see signs of seasons changing all around me, I have found creating a mindful routine for my physical and emotional wellness helps me find more ease. I, personally, can struggle greatly in this love/hate relationship with routine. Every fiber of my being wants to rebel against it, yet every day I manage to have some sort of routine present. Sometimes it's hard to fit in self-care. Seemingly small things are taken for granted or not thought of as practices. But what happens when we give them a little more purpose and attention?

I have had a year full of transitions, letting go, embracing the new (or at least reacquainting with a former) relationship with my roots. Due to many of those often difficult dates we face while grieving, I tend to fall off the face of the earth at the end of summer going into fall. I have had a

“HAVING MOMENTS OF
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ALLOWING THINGS TO JUST *be*
EVEN FOR A MOMENT AT A TIME
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“YOUR WELLNESS PRACTICES ONLY REQUIRE YOU TO *show up*, IN WHATEVER FORM. IT CAN BE A WAY TO FIND MEANING AND PURPOSE TO ASSIST TRANSFORMING YOUR GRIEF INTO A MORE HOPEFUL EXPERIENCE.”

yoga practice turn into meditation, turn to just quiet time reading. An ebb and flow of practice I sometimes adjust daily to keep my sanity, despite what is going on around me.

Having moments of mindfulness, caring for oneself, being grateful, allowing things to just *be* even for a moment at a time can have lasting impacts. Scientific research continuously validates the benefits of mind-body practices in activating your parasympathetic nervous system and in reducing stress that has accumulated — typically combining the benefits of physical fitness, strength, flexibility, posture, chronic pain relief, increased energy, improved sleep, heart health, immune system function, and mental and emotional balance. Sometimes trying new, enjoyable, beneficial activities is a welcome, healthy distraction from

all the heavy within the season. No matter how small, it can bring hope of a new day to share our story and our lives with those around us — a moment to connect and feel grateful.

In creating a winter wellness routine, one of the first things I look at are what sorts of challenges are coming up that I may have to work around. Having different options can take the stress off a routine when it doesn't seem available. If nothing else, it gives us the chance to let go of what just does not work in that moment and be softer with ourselves. Connecting with our own inner teacher gives us tools to find a healthy balance. I am hoping this basic guide will inspire you to get creative in building your own practice to help lift your

spirits and energy levels. Many of these practices help people begin to unplug from working within the conscious mind in order to navigate reality from a different, almost outside perspective, leaving us refreshed, recharged, energized, and thinking clearly.

I always look to my yoga practice first as my way of balancing. Regularly taking the time to release stress through a yoga practice allows you to feel less anxiety, depression, and stress off the mat and into the rest of your week.

MEDITATION is useful either with or without a yoga practice. Many people can find meditating quite difficult. Everyone experiences what is referred to as the “monkey mind.” Meditating is more about being aware of that chaos, acknowledging it, and coming back to your breath.



PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/LEONID IKAN, JAG_CZ, PIXDELUXE, 4MAKSYM

"THE *smallest win* THROUGHOUT THE DAY, OR EVEN THE COURAGE TO FACE IT AT ALL, DEFINITELY WARRANTS SOME LOVE."

If just focusing on your breath is still a challenge, you can try a guided meditation or more of a somatic awareness type of practice — focusing on the thoughts in your head, your feelings, emotions, moods in your heart, and finally sensations within your entire body. Becoming aware, connecting, and getting curious about where things feel different and where the breath goes, helps bring you into the present moment.

SELF MASSAGE also brings a meditative and therapeutic aspect to a daily practice. All that's needed is some massage oil or lotion that you enjoy best, then truly feel and appreciate your body for all it does for you every day.

BREATH WORK can be brought into any part of your day, bringing more energy or calmness:

- * Try inhaling for a count of three.
- * Follow the breath in your nose, down the back of the throat, into the lungs, expanding into all parts of the chest and filling the abdomen to your hips.
- * Pause at the top of your inhale for up to a count of three.
- * Exhale a count of three following the breath out of the body in reverse from hips, to chest, and out the nose or mouth.
- * Pause again at the bottom of the exhale for up to three counts.
- * Continue for a few breaths or a few minutes until you feel centered.

DANCE PARTIES are such a good way to release pent-up emotions. Dancing not only brings movement to your body, but relaxation, energy, and more joy into your day.

JOURNALING can provide a cathartic way to release anything that is stuck, be it a gratitude journal, a daily review of events, a dream journal, short stories, or even nonsense and nothings floating around through your head.

ARTS AND CRAFTS are other creative outlets that can make wonderful practices, helping process grief, stress, anxiety, and depression in a new way.

FOOD plays a big role in our health and wellness. I look to balance what I'm eating, awareness of what my body actually wants or needs, and how it feels after eating — even into the next day. Get as much fresh food as possible, stay hydrated, enjoy the atmosphere while eating, and love what you're eating. We can naturally gravitate toward foods that help each season. For winter, think warm drinks, stews, soups, dark greens, warming foods, and spices.

CONNECTION AND SOCIALIZATION of some sort — whether sports or workout classes, women's or men's circles, church groups, grief groups, or clubs — may not be a daily routine, but they are still an important aspect of a good mental health practice.

GET OUT INTO NATURE. This one can make a huge difference in your mood, but it tends to be neglected during the colder months. I'm not saying this has to be an excessive amount of time; it can be as simple as going for a walk or playing in the snow. Five minutes of feeling the fresh air and, potentially, the sun.



When you're done, you will have the bonus of getting all cozy afterward with something warm to drink!

PLAY, however that may come, as long as it's something you enjoy. As adults, I feel it sadly becomes underrated, but play can be exactly what your day needs.

LISTEN TO YOUR FAVORITE MUSIC to fit your mood or desired mood. Get lost in the sounds, vibrations, singing, and you can also work in one of the dance parties I mentioned for added benefit.

FIND A WAY TO GIVE BACK, volunteer, or share in some way a kindness. Looking outside of ourselves to others can help us feel lighter in our own struggle. Be sure you show some of that kindness to yourself! The smallest win throughout the day, or even the courage to face it at all, definitely warrants some love.

SLEEP AND REST are so important! During the winter months you may find yourself needing even more of it, and that's perfectly fine! If sleep is something you struggle with, there are many things here that can help, but also so many other resources available. Guided meditations, breathing exercises, yoga/yoga Nidra (literally yogic sleep) are available, so try different things and find what works for you. Also, a rest or restorative day can lift the spirits, recharge the body, help prevent burnout, and allow for things to fully integrate into your awareness.

Finally, get help and guidance whenever you need it — teachers in various practices, mental health practitioners, coaches, family, and friends. Knowing when you

need an outside perspective or help is one of the best ways to honor your well-being!

Remember that your wellness practices only require you to show up, in whatever form. It can be a way to find meaning and purpose to assist transforming your grief into a more hopeful experience. By including something that your loved one enjoyed or viewed as important, you can honor them, grieve, and heal all at once. All of these practices are a way of becoming more present, feeling, and giving love to oneself. It is in no way exhaustive, but hopefully these ideas spark your imagination and help you bring presence into your everyday. Play with it, change it up, rejuvenate, look after your wonderful self, and keep warm!

About the Author

Rayanne Hunter is a mind-body nutrition coach and yoga instructor specializing in grief, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress. She is a member of the Advisory Board for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.



**"ALL OF THESE PRACTICES ARE
A WAY OF BECOMING
MORE PRESENT, FEELING,
AND GIVING *love* TO ONESELF."**



Re-Creating HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

Ideas for Families Facing Very Different Holidays

Tina Barrett, EdD, LCPC ★ TAPS Advisory Board



Holidays can be stressful, even during the best of times. For families grieving a loved one, significant dates hold even more emotional intensity and complexity. Reminders of the season — lights, music, decorations, and gift-giving — may seem out of sync with internal feelings or may trigger painful memories for families facing a very different holiday.

The following are a few ideas for the holiday season. We encourage you to sift through them. Embrace and try on those that give you strength. Ignore the others. Consider your own ideas to manage stress and create moments of meaning for you:

1. Clarify *priorities*, and reduce stress.

- ★ May you give yourself permission to do things very differently. And, may you give yourself permission to continue traditions that bring you comfort and peace. Pause and consider what you truly want and need to do. Do you really want to clean? Host? Attend an event? If so, do so with bells and whistles. If you are dreading something, listen to yourself.
- ★ Strive to eliminate unnecessary pressures on yourself and others.

- ★ Resist overextending or overcommitting. Be realistic to avoid feeling that you have failed or let someone down. Shift the focus to things that are really important to you and your family.
- ★ Inventory your holiday traditions. What are your favorite family traditions? Is it important to carry them on this year, or is this a good time to begin some new ones?
- ★ Reevaluate ways of continuing traditions you find meaningful in ways that honor your loss, without adding stress or pain. Attempt to merge traditions in blended or newly formed families.

2. Take care of *you*.

- ★ May you let go of pleasing everyone else and do some things that are especially meaningful to YOU.
- ★ Think about blatant self-care. What could bring you even the tiniest bit of comfort, peace, or beauty? A daily bath? A walk with a dear friend? Reading silly books or magazines? A precious flower? Polishing your toenails? Listening to your favorite music? Visiting a museum, library, café, or other special place?
- ★ Don't forget the basics: eat well, drink lots of water, sleep, exercise, and spend time with supportive others.



★ Find a creative outlet for all the feelings. Write, draw, sew, knit, take photos, cook, dance, sing, etc.

★ Take time to be with others, and give yourself permission to spend time alone. Carve out space to grieve and honor the changes — time to sift through what once was, what may be, and to allow space for this pause in between past and future.

3. Create space to honor your grief and your pain.

★ Do whatever helps with this: talk, cry, write, look at photos, play music, visit special places.

★ Remember it is OK to cry AND it is OK not to cry.

★ Talk with others about your loved one and what is most difficult for you right now. Others may not bring up memories believing that they are protecting you. If you desire, break the silence.

★ Allow yourself to lean on others. It is a gift to get to support someone. Reach out and let someone know you would appreciate time or connection with them.

4. Recognize that our greatest joy may come in doing something for someone else.

★ Great pleasure can come from helping others.

★ If you have the energy, sort out old clothes and household items and donate them to a shelter, group home, or thrift store. Think about making cookies

for someone who has been especially supportive to you. Write a note to someone who has been on your mind and loves mail. Donate a can of food to a food bank.

5. Be intentional and mindful of your children's needs.

★ Bring your children into the planning of the holiday and make it positive for them.

★ Include them in activities that acknowledge the loss and honor your loved one.

★ Listen to them, talk to them, and be with them.

★ When asked directly, kids often have clear ideas about how they wish to acknowledge people they care about who are not present during the holidays, such as lighting a candle, cooking a special dish, or saying their loved one's name.

Ideas compiled from Tamarack Grief Resource Center staff and Johnson, WY (1991). *The Holidays: A mixture of love and pain*. Thanatos, p. 28-29.

About the Author

Tina Barrett, EdD, LCPC is Executive Director and Co-Founder of Tamarack Grief Resource Center in Montana and a member of the Advisory Board for Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors.





KIDS, GRIEF, AND THE



Andy McNeil, MA ★ Senior Advisor, TAPS Youth Programs

The holiday season is a magical time for children of all ages. It is during this time of year that children and teenagers have an extended break from school. They can be with friends and family in settings and doing activities that they may not be able to do other times of the year. At the same time, when children and teenagers are grieving, the holidays can be challenging as they navigate the celebrations and fun times while also reconciling their feelings of grief. We can help our children and teenagers traverse these challenges as we support them as family and friends.

HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF WAYS WE CAN SUPPORT THEM DURING THIS TIME OF YEAR

BE HONEST AND VALIDATE THEIR EXPERIENCES

Be honest with your children if you are struggling with the holiday season. This will validate their experience if they are also having a hard time. Children are keen observers and probably already know anyway. We might say something like, "This year, the holidays are going to be difficult for me because I am going to miss (dad, mom, my brother, your uncle, my son, your brother, etc.), I wonder what it is like for you or what you are thinking about as the holidays are approaching." When we are honest with our children and validate their experience, we build a foundation of trust that can sustain us through the most challenging times, and, in this case, better prepare you for the holidays together.

MAKE A PLAN

You can also make a plan based on the needs of each of your family members. You may want to have a plan if you are at holiday events and find the need for you or one of your children to step away because of your grief. It can also be helpful to anticipate that different grief reactions may be a part of the holidays. This is another way you can validate your and your children's feelings of grief and reframe expectations for the holidays. Mostly, give yourself and your children a pass on holiday events or celebrations as you may need. It is OK to work this into your plans for the holiday season.

BE OPEN TO CHANGE

Finally, it can be helpful to reframe our expectations of the holiday season by being open to change. Just as grief has changed our perspectives and brought much change to our lives, this can also be true for the holidays. We might keep some traditions that are meaningful to us. But, we might also find that some traditions no longer hold the same meaning as before. It is OK to make changes, do something different, or take a break from certain traditions to better accommodate your and your children's needs. You can always return to past traditions in the future when you are all ready to do so.



PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/OLGA KAYA, FATCAMERA, OLGA KAYA, YULYA BORTULYOVA, AMTITUS, TAPS ARCHIVES



FAMILY HOLIDAY *Activities*



Family Holiday Activity Ideas that Acknowledge Your Grief and Honor Your Special Person

YEAR-END LETTER

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Notebook Paper or Typing Paper
- Envelopes
- Pen, Pencil, or Colored Pencils

DESCRIPTION

Writing is a great way to express your thoughts and feelings. This is also true for our grief. Quite often, there are things that we wish we could share with our person who died. Writing a “year-end” letter to your person is one way to express

some of these sentiments you might have, update accomplishments, and express feelings of grief. Allow each family member to write their own letter. You can help younger children write a letter if they need ideas.



Here are some prompts you can use to help jump start your thoughts:

- I want you to know...
- If I could, I would...
- Something that happened recently is...
- I’m sorry...
- I worry...
- I am happy that/for...
- I wish...
- I miss...
- I am looking forward to...

SPECIAL MEMORIES TOGETHER

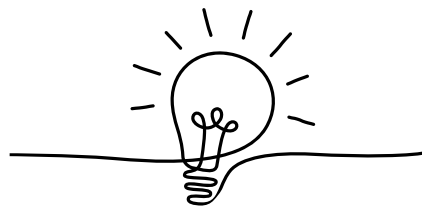
SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Pen and Paper
- Items to Create the Special Memory

DESCRIPTION

Ask each person in the family to write a special memory they have of a past holiday, special meal, or activity that

reminds them of your special person. Decide which meals or activities you



might be able to incorporate into your holiday season to remember the special time you had with your person. You can spread these special gatherings, meals, or activities throughout the holiday season. This is a great way to acknowledge your grief while also sharing special moments together as a family.

KLINGER, A STORY OF HONOR AND HOPE

Based on *Klinger*, a real horse that serves in the U.S. Army Caisson Platoon in Arlington Cemetery, Betsy Beard’s *Klinger* is an endearing story written for TAPS honoring all of America’s beloved fallen heroes. The children’s book illustrates a young horse dreaming of fame as a racehorse, struggling to achieve his dreams, and then finding fulfillment in honoring fallen heroes and bringing comfort to their families. A journey of loss, grief, and hope, *Klinger* is a wonderful and helpful book for young children experiencing grief over the death of a military loved one. To learn more about *Klinger*, visit taps.org/publications/2010/klinger.



TAPS YOUTH PROGRAMS

TAPS offers support programs for children and teenagers grieving the death of a military family member. Led by caring professionals in child development, grief support, mental health, and education, TAPS Youth Programs provide safe spaces for surviving military children to be supported in their grief while also experiencing fun, adventure, mentorship, and camaraderie. We invite you to visit taps.org/youthprograms to explore available TAPS Youth Programs events, including Good Grief Camps, Family Campouts, online groups, and online workshops.



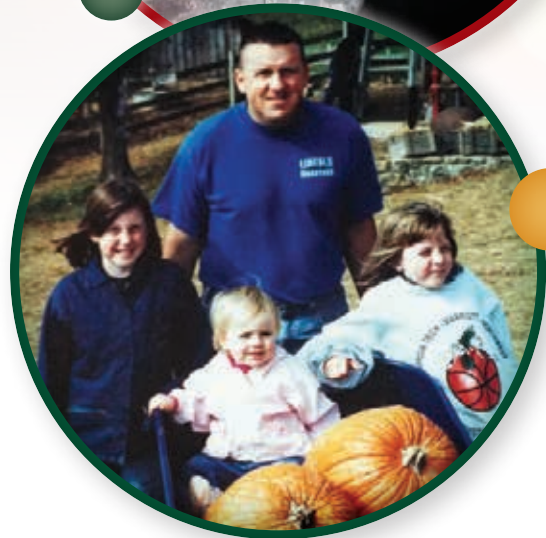
"Sweet" Holiday Memories

Kelly McHugh-Stewart ★ Surviving Daughter of
U.S. Army COL John M. McHugh

The friendships made within a military community are unlike any other. Growing up on U.S. Army posts across the country, I was fortunate to make friends all over the world. Moving here to there, none of us Army Brats had regular "hometowns;" rather, each post we were stationed at became our hometown, and with every new friendship came a close bond.

Even after my dad's death in 2010, the traditions and friendships we made as an Army family remained strong. Today, this recipe serves as a reminder of that simple fact — and every time I make it, it reminds me of my military roots.

My mom got this recipe from an Army spouse friend who got it from another Army spouse friend. It's delicious, yes, but in addition to that, it also brings back all the "sweet" memories of growing up among what I consider to be one of the best communities in the world.



"This recipe brings back all the "sweet" memories of growing up among what I consider to be one of the best communities in the world."



PHOTOS: KELLY MCHUGH-STEWART; PEXELS.COM/MIGUEL Á PADRIÑÁN



Christmas Cracker Candy

Method

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.
- Line a 9x13 baking dish with tin foil, then line it with saltine crackers so the entire bottom of the pan is covered.
- Melt the butter and sugar together in a medium-sized saucepan and cook over medium heat. Continue to cook, stirring frequently for another 3 to 5 minutes, until the mixture comes to a boil and starts to darken.
- Pour the hot brown butter and sugar mixture over the top of the saltine crackers and spread evenly to coat them all.
- Pour the bag of peanut butter chips evenly over the top of the crackers and put the pan in the oven for 5 minutes or until the peanut butter chips are melted.
- Remove from the oven and use a spatula to spread the melted chips evenly over the crackers.
- Once the peanut butter chips are spread, pour the bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips over top and place the pan back in the oven for 5 more minutes, until the chocolate chips are melted.
- Using your spatula, spread the melted chocolate chips evenly over the peanut butter. Let the pan cool entirely before putting it in the freezer to harden (about 3-5 hours).
- Once completely frozen, remove from the freezer, remove from the glass pan, and use a knife to break the candy into small pieces.

Enjoy!

Ingredients

- 1 sleeve of saltine crackers
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 cup of butter
- 1 12-ounce bag of peanut butter chips
- 1 12-ounce bag of semi-sweet chocolate chips

Special recipes have a way of bringing families and friends together, especially during the holiday season, and these recipes take on new meaning when they're connected to a loved one you've lost. Just the aroma of a certain cookie in the oven can bring to mind fun, flour-coated memories in the kitchen. That first taste of a favorite holiday dish your loved one requested year after year can bring a warm wave of comfort on even the coldest winter's day.

HAVE A RECIPE TO SHARE?

Recipes and memories are best shared, and TAPS wants to hear both! Email editor@taps.org with your recipe, a memory of your loved one you connect to it, and any photos you'd like to share with your TAPS family. We would love to feature it in next year's TAPS Magazine Winter issue.

Healing Your Holiday Grief

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D. ★ TAPS Advisory Board

If you could go back in time and relive a special holiday, which one would you choose? Close your eyes for a moment and think about this holiday. Now, slowly, walk through this memory in your mind.

What made it so special? What were the surroundings like? Who inhabits this memory with you?

Holidays have such rich associations for us because humankind created them as a way to honor and celebrate that which is truly important. We step out of the hustle and bustle of our day-to-day routines and into a world where our spiritual beliefs and connection to others matter above all else. We give pause to give thanks, and we share of ourselves.

As the Grinch learned that memorable Christmas, the holidays don't really come from a store — they come from the heart and soul.

Which is why when someone loved dies, the holidays can be so very painful. The heart of the holidays has been torn apart. Without love, what is life? Without the people we love, what are the holidays?

I want you to know that you can find continued meaning in the holidays and in life. You can continue to live and love fully. You must grieve, but you can also celebrate.

Setting Your Intention to Heal

It takes a true commitment to heal in your grief. Yes, you are changed, but with commitment and intention you can and will become whole again. Commitment goes hand in hand with the concept of "setting your intention." Intention is defined as being conscious of what you want to experience. A close cousin to "affirmation,"

it is using the power of positive thought to produce a desired result.

How can you use this in your journey through holiday grief? By setting your intention to heal.

Turning to Ritual

Setting your intention to mourn and heal during the holidays — and beyond — is one important way to move forward in your grief journey. Harnessing the power of ritual is another. We create holiday rituals because everyday activities and normal conversations cannot capture our most profound thoughts and feelings. Rituals give them voice and shape. So, we decorate our Christmas trees, light our menorahs, give gifts, hold hands, and say prayers.

During your time of grief, the very rituals of the holidays can help you survive them. Try participating in some of your normal holiday traditions but with a focus on your grief. When you light candles in your home, do it in honor of the person who died. You might also create a special holiday ceremony or private ritual in memory of the person who died. The holidays are ritualistic and ritual can help you survive (and heal) right now. Remember this when you are considering whether or not to participate in your next holiday tradition.

Living in the Now

Return once more to the holiday memory I asked you to conjure up at the beginning. This memory is so special to you because you were so very present to the moment. When your grief overwhelms you this holiday season, try focusing on the now. Your grief wants you to live in the past through memories of the precious

person who died. Remembering is indeed important, and your memories will always be a special part of your life.

Your grief will also project you into the future at times. You will worry about what the coming months and years hold for you. Looking ahead is also a normal and natural part of grief.

But when remembering and projecting exhaust you — and they will — return yourself to the present moment. Concentrate on what is going on around you right now. Hear the sounds and see the sights. Try drawing on the power of now to find continued meaning in your holidays and in your life.

You'll notice I have used the generic term "holiday season." By that I mean the winter holidays bookended, in the United States, by Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. In between are the spiritual/religious holidays of Christmas, Hanukkah, and Kwanzaa. But whatever holidays you celebrate and no matter where you live, the principles apply to the holidays that are most meaningful for you — including other holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries sprinkled throughout the calendar year.

About the Author

Alan D. Wolfelt, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the Center for Loss and Life Transition and a member of the TAPS Advisory Board. This article is excerpted from his book, *Healing your Holiday Grief: 100 Practical Ideas for Blending Mourning and Celebration During the Holiday Season*, published by Companion Press and available at centerforloss.com.



A List of Ideas to Heal Your Holiday Grief

Be Compassionate with Yourself

Let your holiday grief be what it is. And let yourself — your new, grieving self — be who you are.

Survive

If the death was very recent, you may be in survival mode this holiday season. If that's true for you, it's OK — the world will keep turning whether you participate in the holidays or not.

Keep What Matters

You might consider simplifying your holiday rituals instead of abandoning them altogether. Keep the traditions that matter most to you and set the others aside, at least for now.

Communicate Your Wishes

Muster the strength and courage to tell the people in your life what your wishes are for the holidays. If you'd like their company but prefer to gather somewhere different than you usually do, say so. If you'd rather skip some of the celebrations this year, tell them. If you're feeling unsure about how to spend the holidays, tell them.

Attend a Remembrance Ceremony

Many hospitals, hospices, and funeral homes host remembrance ceremonies during the holidays. The act of joining together in our grief and ritualizing our mourning can be very healing. Especially early in their grief, many families say it was the most important thing they did during the holidays.

Hang a Special Stocking

If your holiday traditions include hanging stockings, consider hanging a special stocking in memory of the person who died.

Be a Secret Santa

You could probably use some "feeling good" this holiday season. Give yourself a dose of pleasure by giving to someone else.

Prepare Favorite Holiday Foods of the Person Who Died

Special foods are an important part of the holiday traditions. Chances are your family prepares many of the same dishes each holiday, and everyone looks forward to those unique smells and flavors.

If You're Alone, Find Ways to Connect

If you're alone this holiday season, you would be well-served to make an effort to connect with other human beings. Invite your neighbor to dinner. Volunteer at a homeless shelter or nursing home. Join a group at a place of worship.

Make an Appointment with a Grief Counselor

Seeing a counselor or spiritual advisor for just a session or two over the holidays may help you cope better and focus more on what is important to you this year and what is not.

Count Your Blessings

Think of all you have to be thankful for. This is not to deny the hurt, for the hurt needs to take precedence right now. But it may help to consider the things that make your life worth living, too.

Believe in a Better Next Year

Believe in your capacity to heal and grow through grief. Believe in the enduring holiday spirit of giving and love.



For the Loved Ones of Those Who Served and Died



TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

[TAPS.ORG/PROGRAMS-SERVICES](https://TAPS.org/PROGRAMS-SERVICES)



**TAPS NATIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR
HELPLINE**
800-959-TAPS (8277)

The TAPS National Military Survivor Helpline is answered live — 24/7/365 — with gentle care for all those grieving the death of a military loved one. Our loving network of peer professionals ensures that each Helpline caller has open access to all that TAPS provides. Whether a survivor needs emotional support, connection to resources or to programs, or to share what's in their hearts—we always have time, we always answer, and we always care.

**PEER-BASED
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**
TAPS.org/PeerMentors

The foundation of TAPS is survivors helping survivors heal. Our Peer Mentor national network is where survivors are connected with unique and customized support from another survivor who shares a similar grief journey. Military Survivors who are at least 18 months out from their loss, volunteer their time and receive training to become Peer Mentors. As a Peer Mentor, they are closely matched with newly bereaved survivors by manner of loss and relationship to their loved one to help them navigate their unique needs in the aftermath of loss. This program provides comfort to survivors and lets them know that they are not alone. Peer Mentors also lend support at TAPS events throughout the year.

**CASEWORK
ASSISTANCE**
TAPS.org/Casework

TAPS Casework assists surviving military families with a variety of challenges. Our casework team strives diligently to align with partners and third-party resources to address the individual needs of each family. The support they offer is customized to each family and may include services such as pro-bono legal assistance, emergency financial resources, information on state and federal benefits, and private social services support. Survivors receive compassionate and responsive support to guide them towards the path of long-term stability and self-sufficiency.

**EDUCATION
SUPPORT SERVICES**
TAPS.org/EDU

Along the grief journey, experiencing a shift in occupational desires or goals is common for military survivors. TAPS Education Services empowers survivors as they seek to enter a new phase of life and pursue post-secondary education. TAPS serves as a guide to share scholarship information and benefits, align available resources with educational goals, and navigate the best options for financial assistance.

**COMMUNITY-BASED
GRIEF SUPPORT**
TAPS.org/GriefCounseling

Military survivors may benefit from individual mental health professional support. Skilled grief therapists and mental health professionals can help survivors work through such issues as coping with complicated emotions, navigating relationship difficulties, and exploring secondary losses. The right mental health professional can guide survivors to discover their strengths and develop helpful coping skills. TAPS performs careful research to provide connections for survivors to the right mental health professional, trauma resources, and local support groups, all within their local community.

**SURVIVOR
CARE TEAM**
TAPS.org/SurvivorCareTeam

The TAPS Survivor Care Team is comprised of surviving military family members who have received extensive professional training on peer-based support, traumatic death, suicide pre/postvention, and grief support. They are skilled listeners who help assess the needs of newly bereaved survivors. Through personalized support, these peer professionals compassionately create safe spaces where survivors feel heard and are empowered to engage in programs, services, and resources to develop their long-term support systems and healthy coping skills.

**SUICIDE LOSS
SUPPORT**
TAPS.org/Suicide

TAPS has supported thousands of military suicide loss survivors. We understand that suicide grief is unique. A death by suicide can leave behind a wake of powerful, complicated emotions and questions. Our special programs and resources provide compassionate support and hope for all suicide loss survivors, and safe spaces to honor and grieve their loved ones. Our unique approach helps stabilize survivors and surviving families — guiding them towards a path of healthy grieving, healing, and growth.

**CAREGIVER TO
SURVIVOR SUPPORT**
TAPS.org/Caregiver

TAPS raises critical awareness about the effects of toxic exposure and the unique needs of military caregiving families. We ensure that surviving families whose loved one died from illness are recognized, cared for, and aware of all benefits for which they are eligible. We advocate for improvements in caregiver support before, during, and after their time as a caregiver. TAPS also provides healing connections to other caregiver survivors and programs that support healthy next steps for families who have lost their loved ones after having been their caregivers.

**ONLINE
COMMUNITY**
TAPS.org/OnlineCommunity

The TAPS Online Community allows for easy and meaningful connections with military survivors from across the country and around the world. TAPS online groups are peer-led, facilitated sessions where there's never pressure to share, but always an opportunity. TAPS workshops and online series are geared towards building supportive communities, and learning together as we process new information and share perspectives, to help all of us find inspiration, clarity and connection.

**WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT**
TAPS.org/Empowerment

TAPS Women's Empowerment programming helps female survivors incorporate concepts of identity and spirituality into transformative goal-setting. We provide survivors with tools to inspire confidence that help them move into the lives they are creating since their loss. Through in-person and online events, we bring together a vibrant, compassionate community and supportive sisterhood of surviving women who treasure opportunities to be each other's teachers, confidants, cheerleaders, and friends.

**MEN'S
PROGRAMMING**
TAPS.org/Men

The TAPS Men's Program was designed by men, for men, and helps pave the way for fathers, brothers, sons, battle buddies and all men to grieve in their own way, at their own pace. At TAPS, surviving men lean on each other to share their experiences, strength and hope while building powerful bonds of brotherhood. Together, men grow stronger by elevating one another to be the best versions of themselves and to honor the legacy of their military and veteran loved ones.

**YOUTH
PROGRAMS**
TAPS.org/YouthPrograms

Though their lives are impacted by grief, young TAPS survivors know their lives will also be marked by camaraderie, mentorship, emotional maturity, adventure, and fun. Led by experts in the fields of child development, children's grief and loss, mental health, and education, TAPS Youth Programs provide safe spaces for surviving military children (ages 5-18) to explore grief and embrace healing at Good Grief Camps and Family Camps. Online programming is also available for parents and guardians of grieving children.

**YOUNG ADULTS
PROGRAM**
TAPS.org/YoungAdults

Designed for surviving military children and siblings ages 18-30, the Young Adults Program provides a dynamic curriculum focused on five pillars of growth. Through in-person, multi-day experiences, and online group discussions, we provide young adult survivors with tools to help them grow with their grief. The five pillars of growth that frame the programming include: personal development, financial stability, communication, career development, and service to others. TAPS young adult survivors connect with others and engage to create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth.

**TAPS INSTITUTE
FOR HOPE
AND HEALING®**
TAPS.org/Institute

The TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing® is a national and worldwide leader in training and education for grief and loss professionals, and bereaved individuals and families, both military and civilian. The Institute provides programming on grief and bereavement at no cost to all through webinars, webcasts, and other events. Topics focus on a variety of topics, such as understanding and responding to suicide; children's grief; practical tips for coping with loss; wellness workshops; and creative ways to keep the memories of lost loved ones alive. For professionals, the Institute hosts academic programs instructed by field experts, and a wide range of health and social service professional boards offer continuing education credits for these programs.

PUBLICATIONS
TAPS.org/Publications

TAPS has created several proprietary publications to serve the survivor community, offer valuable inspiration, and share information on resources and services to support grief, suicide loss, children's grief, and navigating benefits and finances after loss. All resources are available at no cost to military survivors. Our other publications include the book, *Healing Your Grieving Heart after a Military Death: 100 Practical Ideas for Families and Friends* by Bonnie Carroll and Alan D. Wolfelt, PhD; the children's book, *Klinger: A Story of Honor and Hope*; and, the *TAPS Magazine*.

THANK YOU: FOR SUPPORTING OUR MISSION IN 2022

TAPS is grateful for the incredible outpouring of support we received in 2022. We are humbled that so many members of our TAPS family brought us along as they honored their loved one; we applaud the communities around the country who gathered to pay tribute to local heroes; and we sincerely thank our growing circle of supporters for sharing the TAPS mission.

When you fundraise for TAPS, you are doing so much more than raising money. You are helping to sustain the resources and programs our TAPS family depends on. You are spreading awareness of the TAPS mission. And, most importantly, you are sharing your loved one's story.

WE WANTED TO SHARE JUST A FEW OF THE HUNDREDS OF EVENTS HOSTED FOR TAPS BY OUR TAPS FAMILIES THIS YEAR.

FOR PETE'S SAKE

AN EVENT TO HONOR A FALLEN HERO AND RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT SOLDIER SUICIDE
LEGION MEMORIAL PARK, HOLLIDAYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

On June 11, 2022, family and friends of U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Peter Dannenberg commemorated "Pete Dannenberg Day" by hosting a suicide awareness event and fundraiser to benefit TAPS, in honor of their fallen hero who died by suicide on June 6, 2021.

Activities included free family games and entertainment with local food and beverages for purchase. The purpose of the event was to combat the stigma associated with seeking care for mental health issues for career war fighters, while encouraging active engagement with needed resources — not only when facing a mental health crisis, but in an ongoing, preventative course of care.



SPENCER WING MEMORIAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

7TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT TO HONOR LCPL SPENCER WING, USMC
STONEHEDGES GOLF COURSE, GROTON, NEW YORK

On September 10, 2022, the Wing family hosted the 7th Annual Spencer Wing Memorial Golf Tournament to honor their son, LCpl. Spencer Wing, who passed away in 2013. This annual tournament is held at the golf course where Spencer worked in high school and includes golf foursomes, a raffle, dinner, and lots of fun challenges out on the course.

"Thank you to everyone who came out to celebrate Spencer! It was a perfect day for golf. I am honored by all of the people who came out to play, support, volunteer, donate, or just celebrate!"

Colleen Conner Hamilton ★ Surviving Mother of LCpl. Spencer Wing



12TH ANNUAL WINDY25 MEMORIAL 5K RUN-WALK

RUN TO CELEBRATE THE LIVES OF THE CREW AND PASSENGERS OF WINDY25
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

Windy25 was the call sign of the U.S. Army aircraft from F Company, 159th Aviation Regiment "Big Windy." The crew and soldiers made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan on April 6, 2005.

The Windy25 Memorial Fund was created to honor their legacies by actively supporting the families left behind, through TAPS and other VSO partners. Runners can participate and fundraise individually, or form a team to conquer the streets of Las Vegas together!

DANCING FOR TAPS

GETTING YOUR GROOVE ON WHILE SUPPORTING TAPS FAMILIES

CHURCHVILLE, MARYLAND

Dancing with Friends welcomed dancers of all levels of expertise to a dance lesson and reception to support TAPS.

“The Dancing With Friends studio was proud to sponsor the second ‘Dancing for TAPS’ event on July 29, 2022. The evening was attended by local surviving families, soldiers from Aberdeen Proving Ground, community leaders, and the public, who all came together to show support for TAPS. A fun time was had by all: dancing, bidding on wonderful silent auction items, and enjoying wonderful food. This year’s event raised double the amount from our first ‘Dancing For TAPS’ event. Thank you from everyone at Dancing With Friends to all those that came out, learned to dance, and donated to this incredible organization.”

Tom Rzepnicki ★ Owner, Dancing with Friends & Jim Costigan ★ Chairman, ‘Dancing for TAPS’



LEMONADE STAND

LEARNING ABOUT GIVING AT AN EARLY AGE

ST. JOHN'S, FLORIDA

TAPS Lemonade Stands have been hosted in front yards across America by families and children wanting to support the TAPS mission.

“This past weekend our family set up a lemonade stand with all of the money going to TAPS. It was super hot and humid, but the kids were excited for each customer and raised \$85! I know it’s a small amount, but I’m really proud of the kids, and I am hoping we taught them maybe a little bit about Memorial Day with all of our talks about TAPS. I was even flattered that a neighbor was inspired by our stand and is raising money through her small business to donate as well.”

Meridith Beach & Family



STUDIO SWEAT

24-HOUR HERO RIDE TO RAISE MONEY FOR TAPS

STUDIO SWEAT ONDEMAND

Studio Sweat onDemand hosted a combined virtual and in-studio marathon ride in their San Diego Studio to raise critical funds for TAPS. Studio Sweat trainers kept the wheels turning and surpassed their goal of \$21,210.

“We’ve always been supportive of the men and women in our armed forces, and TAPS brings so much positivity to those who have lost so much. We are so proud of our worldwide community who rallied together to give back to an organization with such an honorable mission. They proved once again that the power of the human spirit is alive and well.”

Brian LaRose ★ Trainer and CFO of Studio Sweat onDemand



GIANT FOOD EMPLOYEE “FILL THE BACKPACK” DRIVE

LANDOVER, MARYLAND

Summer interns at Giant Food organized a “Fill the Backpack” campaign at the urging of their advisors. They collected arts-and-craft supplies, soccer balls, pens, crayons, games, and supplies for the Good Grief Camps. Giant Food matched the cash that was collected, bringing the total to nearly \$10,000!



» FUNDRAISE FOR TAPS IN YOUR COMMUNITY IN 2023!

Please contact development@taps.org if you are interested in hosting an event.

» INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING TAPS?

Visit taps.org/support to see all the ways you can make a difference.

The gift of Remembrance







Support THE MISSION, Honor THE LEGACY

Honor Your Loved One on Our Memorial Wall at TAPS National Headquarters

Our headquarters in Arlington, VA is America's home for all those grieving the death of a military loved one. We honor all of our military loved ones, support the TAPS mission, and commemorate lives lived in selfless service with our Hero Wall. Our heroes' legacies and love live on.

We invite all military survivors to honor the legacies of their fallen heroes by purchasing a tribute tile on our Hero Wall, including pictures of loved ones and personalized inscriptions. They will be proudly and permanently displayed by the entry of the TAPS National Headquarters, and your donation supports TAPS programs and services.

 <p>Remembrance: \$250 Remember your loved one with this 4" x 5" tile.</p>
 <p>Tribute: \$500 Create a tribute to your loved one with 8" x 5" tile.</p>
 <p>Salute: \$1,000 Salute your loved one with this 8" x 10" tile.</p>
 <p>Honor: \$2,500 Honor your loved one with this 16" x 10" tile.</p>
<p><small>* Personalize these tiles with a picture and an inscription.</small></p>



**YOUR DONATION SUPPORTS
TAPS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**Select and personalize
your hero's tile.**

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Men Share Their Holiday Grief Journeys With TAPS

Rich Cliff ★ Surviving Father of Capt. Richard G. Cliff, Jr.
Jon Ganues ★ Surviving Father of A1C Jon Wesley Ganues, Jr.
Matt Daud ★ Surviving Father of Cpl. Christopher Daud

Much of what is considered strong versus weak or normal versus abnormal is based in stigma. Men — whether by societal stigma or self-appointed responsibility — are often looked at to be strength in times of weakness, stoic despite emotions flowing all around. But grieving the loss of a loved one is not a sign of weakness, and the growing participation in an already very active TAPS Men's Program is an indicator for men everywhere that grief is natural. You do not always have to be the resolute one — even in grief — for those around you. Our TAPS Men's Program participants can attest that the stoicism can be pulled off for a time, but keeping it up as the days march on takes a toll, both mentally and physically.

What are men experiencing? Throughout TAPS Men's programming, we asked some of the surviving men about their thoughts on holidays and milestones.

• Chuck Reineck •

Surviving Father of U.S. Navy MM3 Brandon Reineck

"When my son died, I 'canceled' Christmas. I refused to put up any decorations or speak to anyone about the holidays. I just wanted the holidays to be over as soon as possible. I did not feel I deserved to celebrate anything and wanted to be left alone. I pushed all my loved ones away. That happened for two holidays. After attending TAPS seminars, workshops, and meetings with other men, I learned how not to hide, but to move forward. I no longer want the holidays to be over."

• Darrin Cowher •

Surviving Father of U.S. Army Pfc. Christian D.L. Cowher

"Showing the emotional strength to be present with the family when a big piece of the family is missing is the biggest challenge for me. I have learned to embrace his memory and my emotions and look for better days. [In the] first couple of years, I did not want to be around people. Now I speak of my son in the present tense. We talk about what my son did during the holidays. What would my son do during these upcoming holidays?"

• Stephen Ross •

Surviving Father of U.S. Army Capt. Andrew Ross

"There is definitely a hole, an empty spot, a missing sense of the excitement of the holidays that was once there when I felt whole. I feel pressure to be positive, to not make others feel sad or wonder if I am OK. I don't want their holiday joy lessened because I am seen as struggling...my son would never want that... so I use what he would have wanted as my guide and do my level best to live as he would have wished."



“ I had more support and understanding for the first holidays and birthdays without my son, but as the years pass, I feel pressure to ‘move on’ or ‘get over it.’ ”

• Mike Hammett •

Surviving Father of U.S. Army Spc. Tyler Brent Hammett

“I feel pressure during the holidays to be merry at times when I don’t feel merry. I had more support and understanding for the first holidays and birthdays without my son, but as the years pass, I feel pressure to ‘move on’ or ‘get over it.’ No one ever says those things, but the pressure is subtle — like the blank stares or whispers when my wife still hangs his stocking or [when] we still talk about his favorite sweet potatoes for Thanksgiving. I am grateful that I can turn to my TAPS family, not just at the holidays, but any day of the year.”

• Greg Partyka •

Surviving Father of U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Matthew Patrick McGuire Partyka

“This will be our first cycle. I will go through the holidays remembering him. My son died the day before July 4th. We will turn our grief into a celebration that day with friends and family.”

• Ed Troche •

Surviving Father of U.S. Marine Corps 1st Lt. Christopher Michael Troche

“The holidays are always full of emotion and pressure. As a family we would always look forward to Christmas and New Year’s, [but] not having my wife and son dampens the festive atmosphere that the holidays bring. We, at times, feel that we shouldn’t celebrate the holidays; it’s just never the same.”

• Ron Johnson •

Surviving Stepfather of U.S. Army Pfc. Benjamin Franklin Betts

“I initially did not want to talk during those times. It was a challenge with my family. I now remember the dash. I remember the love and share the journey. An extra chair is set out empty at the table for our son. We each come up with one fond memory of him. We play a video of our loved one to see him and hear his voice. The hardest thing for the family is breaking the ice for those that are reluctant to participate.”

• Charlie Liebert •

Surviving Father of Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class Keith Allen Liebert

“Getting together at Thanksgiving is a major family event. We remember our son. Weep — don’t hold it back. It helps to cry.”



PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES; PEXELS.COM/HENRY & CO

“ Don't let anyone tell you how you are supposed to feel during these holidays. ”

• Karl Porfirio •

Surviving Father of
U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Tre Francesco Porfirio

“Don't let anyone tell you how you are supposed to feel during these holidays. My son's death occurred around the time of Thanksgiving, so I do not celebrate it. If you don't feel like celebrating, you don't have to. Don't be pressured by others to have to celebrate. I put my son's picture on an empty seat, [even when] we go to a restaurant.”

• Pat Conaway •

Surviving Father of U.S. Army Col. Brett P. Conaway

“I'm a little afraid of the holidays. We are still in shock. Thanksgiving is a big deal, so it will be a tough challenge. I worry about nephews, nieces, and grandchildren.”

• Scott McCutcheon •

Surviving Father of
U.S. Army Spc. Samuel Christopher McCutcheon

“Several months ago, I completed all my 'firsts.' Each one was a little different in terms of expectations and actuality. Sometimes one was extremely sad. I've learned a lot from [the] Men's Online Group — stories and accomplishments. I have spent this past year leaning on my bros around this room [in the Men's chat] and remembering the lessons I've learned.”

TAPS Men's Program

TAPS understands that most men need other men to pave the way for them to grieve as men grieve, not as women would want them to. No matter what loss brought you to TAPS, you have a home here.

There are many ways to get involved with TAPS Men's Programming — through our Online Community, at TAPS National and Regional Seminars, or at one of our Retreats or Experiences. No matter how or when you choose to connect, you will always be welcome.

Join us for our bi-monthly online chats on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month. Whether it's your first time or you're a regular attendee, you are always welcome.

Learn more about TAPS Men's Programming at taps.org/men.



New Year's

Remembering the Love

Ellen Andrews ★ Surviving Fiancé of U.S. Navy Lt. David J. Huber

I can't say that I remember much about the first new year after David died. Those first months were a blur. I somewhat remember that I felt a bit like the loser in a prize fight after having endured the one-two punch of Thanksgiving and Christmas. Your mind and heart are already carrying the heavy burden of grief only to have salt rubbed into that wound with the onslaught of the festive holiday season.

Strangely, the new year almost came as a relief — relief of having survived the holidays. Yet, there was anxiety with facing a new year without my love, who I missed with a depth that can't be described.

I experienced one of the challenges of grief — the sensation of a loss of control. Everything had changed; everything was swirling. The calendar reflected this as it marched on — flipping from one month to the next when, at times, I just wanted it to stop...even if only for a moment to catch my breath.

The calendar almost mocks us in those early days of the grief journey. Our hearts want to cling to the past, reverse time. Yet the calendar is signaling to look forward. At no time is this more prevalent than on New Year's Eve and New Year's Day — a

closing out of the old year and looking toward the new. This is a time celebrated with revelry, a sense of wonder and promise.

I recall vividly the new year David and I shared in Boston. Walking around Boston — the air was cold, but there was a warmth with people out and about, all in a festive mood and getting ready to ring in the new year. Clam chowder at Durgin Park, ice sculptures, and celebrating the new year at a medieval dinner theater — we were looking forward to what the new year would bring. We were planning our wedding, our future. We were looking ahead with hope, excitement, and love. Forty-four days later, though, it was all shattered in an instant. The promise of that New Year's Eve was gone.

As I shared earlier, it is difficult to recall exactly how I felt that first new year. Perhaps not remembering is my brain's way of sparing me from the memory of just how painful it was at the time. That new year came and went, and I moved along my personal journey. The calendar marched on. The days, weeks, months, and years passed.

I can't recall when holidays, including New Year's, became tolerable for me. It was

a gradual progression over time...a switch didn't all of a sudden get flipped.

I tried to hold onto my faith and to the fact that I had family and friends who would be there to support me. And while it took time, I was able to break free from the intense pain of grief and focus on the wonderful man who had been a part of my life and taught me so much. I was able to look at those images from New Year's in Boston and smile once again. Granted, this did not come quickly or easily. I found peace. I found smiles. I found joy again.

You may be navigating your first new year, or you may have experienced a few turns of the calendar since your world was forever changed. Each year can bring a myriad of emotions — reflecting back and looking forward, carrying a heavy heart, or discovering a new lightness you haven't felt in a while, spending the time quietly at home, or out sharing time with friends and family.

There is no right path, no quick solution. You don't necessarily get over it — you get through it. This experience is part of you. You carry that forward into a new year and into a space you did not expect.

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOT.COM/ROMOLOTAVANI, THEKOPMYLIFE

***"There is no right path, no quick solution.
You don't necessarily get over it — you get through it.
This experience is part of you.***

***You carry that forward into a new year and
into a space you did not expect. You do not,
however, enter into this uncharted territory alone."***

Ellen Andrews

You do not, however, enter into this uncharted territory alone.

You have the support of the community of survivors to which you now belong. A community that, regardless of when, where, or how you came to them, will welcome you with compassion and understanding, and without hesitation. This circle of love will be with you now and for the weeks, months, and years to come. While your journey, emotions, and perspectives may shift over time, there will always be a place for you.

If you need support, this community will be there. If you need to find purpose and use your experience to be a comforting presence to another, you can find avenues to help you take this step through TAPS and in your local community. If, after a few years, you just need to reconnect, the same arms that welcomed you in the darkest days of grief will be waiting for you again.

Many make resolutions as the calendar changes. While I am not big on this concept, I do hope you resolve to grant yourself a little patience, gentleness, and compassion in the new year. This is a difficult journey. You may be working through those early times of grief. Or, you

may have reached a place of equilibrium, finding strength, purpose, and a new appreciation for the beauty and joy that is still present in the world.

Wherever you are, remember the gifts that have been brought to you on this journey. You have new friends — friends who share the experience of loss and also share their hearts, providing strength and hope. Carry forward the blessings given by your hero. We can't change what has happened. What we can best do is to live — live a full life and be the person they loved. We can carry that love within us and pay it forward.

We can share our experience, and we can share our gifts...just as they shared theirs.

For those new to the grief journey, draw strength from those who help you feel safe and loved. And when you feel you are at that place, celebrate who you are and who you have become through this experience.

***Above all, remember the love this
new year — love given, love received,
love still left to share.***



TAPS[®] ONLINE STORE

TAPS.ORG/SHOP



- 1. KLINGER BOOK AND COMPANION PLUSH HORSE GIFT SET - \$19.99
- 2. TAPS 18K GOLD-PLATED NECKLACE AND LOGO CHARM - \$19.99
- 3. RHINESTONE TAPS BROOCH - \$19.99
- 4. LAPIS GOLDEN GLOBE STRETCH BRACELET - \$29.99 SALE
- 5. KLINGER TODDLER TEE YELLOW - \$14.99
- 6. TAPS PACKABLE WATER-RESISTANT JACKET - \$39.99

PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES

WRAP YOURSELF IN TAPS LOVE THIS *holiday season*

8



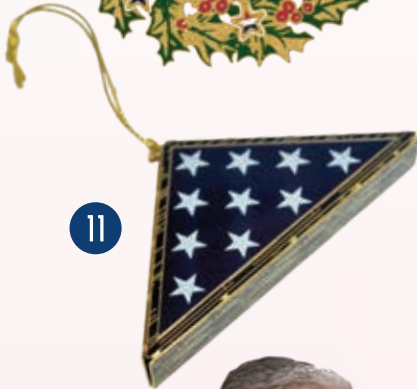
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 11. FOLDED FLAG 24K GOLD-PLATED ORNAMENT - \$24.99
 12. TAPS GIFT CARD - VARIOUS AMOUNTS

13. TAPS GOLD-PLATED CUFFLINKS - \$29.99
 14. EMBROIDERED TAPS UNISEX POLO SHIRT - \$22.99
 15. WOMEN'S ROUND LOGO FULL-ZIP HOODIE - \$29.99

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN YOUR TAPS FAMILY

29TH ANNUAL

National Military Survivor Seminar

AND

Good Grief Camp



MAY 25-29, 2023 • CRYSTAL CITY GATEWAY MARRIOTT, ARLINGTON, VA

Each Memorial Day, our country pauses to remember those who have served and died. As our country reflects on the costs of freedom, we come together — as a family of military survivors — to tell the stories of our heroes. We remember the love they brought to our lives. We celebrate their lives and their service. We share the journey — drawing strength from one another to carry forward; living with purpose, with pride, and with hope.

The Seminar and Good Grief Camp are open to all military survivor adults and youth. If you are unable and/or have concerns to attend in-person, we encourage you to attend our live workshops virtually. Please double check that you select the correct button (in-person or virtual) when you submit your registration.

★ TAPS.ORG/NATIONAL ★



PHOTOS: TAPS ARCHIVES

PHOTO

Adults

If you are grieving the death of a military loved one, whether a family member, friend, or fellow service member, you are encouraged to attend this time of hope and healing. No matter where you are in your grief journey, support and connection await!

During the days we're together, you'll have the opportunity to participate in activities, workshops led by experts in grief and loss, and small-group sharing sessions.

Young Adults

The TAPS Young Adults Program is for 18- to 30-year-old surviving children and siblings and helps our graduating Good Grief Camp children transition into a program all their own.

Transitioning into adulthood offers many challenges. This program takes that into consideration when addressing the five pillars of growth: Personal Development, Financial Stability, Communications, Career Development, and Service to Others. In exploring practical life skills, this program strives to help each individual create a well-rounded life full of hope, healing, and growth.

Youth

The TAPS Good Grief Camp provides a safe space for military children, ages 5 to 18, to explore grief and embrace healing. Led by experts in the fields of child development, mental health, and education — programming mirrors the adult curriculum and provides families with a common language crucial to strengthening family bonds. Children and teens will honor their loved ones, connect with their peers, and learn coping skills through games, crafts, and other age-appropriate activities in a fun and supportive environment.

** Trained, licensed, and insured caregivers will provide child care for all children 5 years old and under who are not yet attending kindergarten.*



Become a Peer Mentor

During the seminar, TAPS will be conducting Peer Mentor training sessions for adult military survivors who are at least 18 months beyond their own loss and are ready to offer support to others. Completing this training provides you with added support for your own journey while partnering closer with us to provide care for survivors who share your loss. As a Peer Mentor, you will have a wide variety of opportunities to choose from to support your peers through activities such as seminars, retreats, TAPS Together, hosting a Care Group, supporting the Online Community, and providing one-to-one mentoring.

If you're interested in attending the Peer Mentor training for adult military survivors, you can register for the in-person training as part of the seminar registration. After you've registered, you'll be contacted by the TAPS Peer Mentor Program staff.

★ TAPS.ORG/BECOMEAPEERMENTOR ★

Make a Resolution **TO JOIN**

MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINARS AND GOOD GRIEF CAMPS



FEBRUARY 2-5

**SOUTHEAST REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Sandestin Grand Hotel
Destin, Florida



MARCH 31-APRIL 2

**MOUNTAIN REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Hyatt Regency Aurora
Denver, Colorado



MAY 25-29

**29TH ANNUAL NATIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Crystal City Gateway Marriott
Arlington, Virginia



JULY 7-9

**NORTHWEST REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Davenport Grand Hotel
Spokane, Washington



AUGUST 25-27

**NORTHEAST REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Hyatt Regency
Buffalo, New York



SEPTEMBER 15-17

**SOUTHERN REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Marriott Riverwalk
San Antonio, Texas



OCTOBER 6-8

**15TH ANNUAL NATIONAL
MILITARY SUICIDE SURVIVOR
SEMINAR AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Doubletree Boston
North Shore
Boston, Massachusetts



OCTOBER 27-29

**WESTERN REGIONAL
MILITARY SURVIVOR SEMINAR
AND GOOD GRIEF CAMP**

Westin
Long Beach, California

YOUR TAPS FAMILY IN 2023

SURVIVOR RETREATS AND EXPERIENCES

JANUARY 20-27



**TAPS MEXICAN
RIVIERA CRUISE**

Los Angeles, California

SURVIVOR SELF-FUNDED EXPERIENCE

APRIL 22-29



**TAPS CARIBBEAN CRUISE AND
COLOR & FLOW RETREAT
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT EVENT**

Miami, Florida

SURVIVOR SELF-FUNDED EXPERIENCE

MARCH 1-5



**ALASKA IDITAROD
SURVIVOR EXPERIENCE**

Anchorage, Alaska

JUNE 14-18



**BLUE RIDGE WOMEN'S WEEK OF
RENEWAL - NEW TO GRIEF**

Boone, North Carolina

MARCH 6-10



**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
UNMARRIED PARTNERS RETREAT**

Savannah, Georgia

OCTOBER 23-27



**WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
MOM'S RETREAT**

Sedona, Arizona

JANUARY 8-29, 2024



ACONCAGUA EXPEDITION

Mendoza, Argentina

SURVIVOR SELF-FUNDED EXPERIENCE



» For more information, visit taps.org/events

Survivor Groups **AND** Online Connections

TAPS CARE GROUPS

TAPS Care Groups bring the feel of TAPS into your community. At our monthly meetings, we provide the most therapeutic thing we can offer — time to talk, opportunities to listen, and the comfort of knowing we are not alone. Care Groups are peer-led, facilitated sessions where there's never pressure to share, but always an opportunity. Whether you drop in occasionally or attend every month, you will always be welcomed.

To learn more and find your local TAPS Care Group, email caregroups@taps.org or call 800.959.TAPS (8277).



taps.org/caregroups

TAPS TOGETHERS

Have you ever wondered if there are other survivors just like you in your local community? A great way to bring survivors together is at a TAPS Together's event.

TAPS Together's are one-day, organized, social events, led by TAPS staff or a survivor like you, with the goal of expanding our peer support community. Powerful experiences, meaningful conversations, and growing in relationships with other military survivors encourages hope and healing. We can draw both strength and inspiration from coming together with survivors in our local communities.

We would love to have you host an event! Scan the QR Code to fill out the interest form or email tapstogetherstaps.org to learn more.



taps.org/togetherstaps.org

TAPS PORTAL

TAPS is excited to announce the recent launch of our TAPS Portal, an enhanced version of our survivor event management area. This platform will improve your ability to register yourself and your family for TAPS events.

ALL SURVIVORS REGISTERING FOR EVENTS, MUST CREATE A TAPS PORTAL ACCOUNT.

Scan the QR Code to create your account today.

Send additional questions about the TAPS Portal to info@taps.org.



[TAPS Portal FAQ](https://taps.org/portalfaq)



TAPS ONLINE COMMUNITY

The TAPS Online Community is here for you — wherever you are in your grief journey, the country, or the world — allowing you to explore all of TAPS online programming in one place.

COUNT ON CONNECTIONS: Online Groups are peer-led, facilitated sessions, where there's never pressure to share, but always an opportunity. Whether you attend once or regularly, you will always be welcomed.

LEARN TOGETHER: Workshops and online series provide the opportunity for us to learn together, have shared experiences or create community — all of which can help normalize our grief and contribute to healing along the way.

Learn more and connect with other survivors at taps.org/community or by emailing online@taps.org.



taps.org/onlinecommunity

TAPS INSTITUTE FOR HOPE AND HEALING®

Empower yourself through grief, resilience, and wellness education at the TAPS Institute for Hope and Healing®, where practical information on coping with loss is accessible to all.

At the Institute, TAPS and the Hospice Foundation of America have teamed up to provide workshops, seminars, panel discussions, and more to help individuals and families thrive after loss, and to train professionals.

Learn more about upcoming programs at taps.org/institute.

Programming is available on demand, 24/7, at taps.org/webinararchives.



taps.org/institute

“Perhaps they are not stars,
but rather openings in heaven where
the love of our lost ones pours through
and shines down upon us
to let us know they are happy.”

- ESKIMO PROVERB





800-959-TAPS (8277) ★ TAPS.org

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors offers comfort, care, and resources to all those grieving the death of a military loved one.

TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

3033 Wilson Boulevard, Third Floor
Arlington, VA 22201

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PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/VJOM; PEXELS.COM/LAURA-JAMES

"There is a ribbon of love wrapped around your heart. It is tied tightly to mine. I am not gone. I will always live in you. Remember my laugh, and let it lift you. Picture my smile often. And hold sweet memories close. Let these words be a gift to you."

- Sharon Cummings

LOVE AND
HOLIDAY HUGS
FROM YOUR
TAPS Family
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU