

## **New Year, New Hope: Suggestions for Facing the New Year after Losing a Loved One**

*With the majority of the holiday spotlight directed towards Thanksgiving and Christmas, it's easy to overlook the difficulty that New Year's Eve can cause after a traumatic year. Here's some support and advice to those who are facing 2010 without a loved one.*

By Joni Aldrich

Most of us look forward to the second when that famous ball drops in Times Square. After all, a new year represents a fresh start, a chance to make the changes in our lives we've been wanting, and an opportunity to put the troubles of the past behind us. All around the world, it has become tradition to close out the past twelve months with cheerful abandon and to toast the incoming year with family and friends. But what if someone close to you is seriously ill, or worse, what if you've lost a loved one during the past twelve months? Most likely you're now facing the yearly ritual of ringing in a new year with a mixture of sadness and—quite frankly—relief that the holidays are almost over.

Nothing is the same after losing a loved one, and as 2010 approaches, it's safe to say that you're probably not feeling the “auld lang syne” spirit. Even if you're not feeling the holiday cheer, though, it is still possible to face the new year with the anticipation of hope.

I speak from experience. In 2006, my husband Gordon lost his two-year battle with cancer. My first book, *The Saving of Gordon: Lifelines to W-I-N Against Cancer* (Cancer Lifeline Publications, 2009, ISBN: 978-1-4392550-3-2, \$19.95) tells the story of what the Aldrich family experienced while simultaneously offering valuable step-by-step advice that will give readers the tools they need to have a fighting chance against cancer. Having now completed my third book, *The Losing of Gordon: A Beacon Through the Storm Called “Grief”* (Cancer Lifeline Publications, 2009, ISBN: 978-1439264935, \$15.95), I tell the inspirational story of my own rebuilding through the grief process after losing my husband.

As the final stretch of 2006 approached, I was happy to see the worst year of my life come to a close. The holidays in general were really rough that first year, but I was blessed to be able to look ahead to New Year's Eve and move forward with rebuilding my life. Absolutely, it was still very painful. But I tried to focus on the days and months ahead as a "clean slate." It was a blackboard that could be filled with possibility and hope. Sometimes it's hard to look at things like that, but it's important for your own mental and emotional well-being.

So, what do I recommend for facing New Year's Eve, either while going through a difficult time or after a traumatic year of loss? Do whatever feels right for you. For instance, don't be coerced into going to a New Year's party, unless you really feel up to it, or unless it's a small, intimate affair with mostly family.

True friends will understand your needs. If people push you to do otherwise, you may go and it might work out okay. However, it could also be a very difficult and depressing evening, especially if you've lost a spouse. You're walking a fine line. While it's not good to be all alone, the overwhelming atmosphere of gaiety at most New Year's parties can assault your ailing spirits.

If you are looking for some guidance as this year's holiday season draws to a close, read on for some suggestions that will help you navigate New Year's Eve:

**On the DO list:**

- Focus on doing something nice for yourself. Schedule a massage or facial. Go shopping with a friend to take advantage of some after-Christmas bargains. It's okay to do something that makes you feel better and to be a little selfish.
- Plan a small, quiet dinner with friends. Make it fun and different. For example, have everyone bring or make foods from various different cultures. On this one night, don't worry about calories.
- Invite some friends or family over to watch upbeat movies. Pick three or four, and run them consecutively until midnight has passed. Another option would be to go to the theatre or symphony.
- Schedule a game night with all of the old favorites: charades, Monopoly, Scrabble—or even some kids' games. This is great for getting the children involved, too.

- It's not necessary to totally avoid the subject of the person whom you have lost. Don't spend all night discussing them, but you may want to take some time to talk about previous New Year's memories and even drink a toast to those who are gone but not far from your thoughts.

**On the DO NOT list:**

- Stay away from crowded, loud parties or bars. This is one year during which too much frivolity can be a downer.
- It's okay to have a few glasses of wine, but keep drinking in general to a minimum. Don't set out to get sloshed. Alcohol is a depressant, and feeling bad on the first day of the New Year won't help you face it with more enthusiasm.
- Avoid making any New Year's resolutions. Nobody sticks to them anyway! Why put yourself through the possibility of enduring future disappointment?
- Don't stay home all by yourself and have a "pity party." You may be entitled to one, but take a break from the negative.
- You don't have to watch the "ball drop" in Times Square unless you really feel like it.

Finally, try to focus on all of the good years you've had in the past, and not on the bad year that just went by. Life is always a combination of good and bad. We should all appreciate the good, and know that when bad things happen in our lives we still need to move forward. You have two choices—face the New Year with hope, or dwell on difficult life experiences that you cannot change. But if you feel that you need help to get through the next few weeks, it's okay to ask for help and support.

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**About the Author:**

Joni James Aldrich believes that she has been preparing to write *The Saving of Gordon* and *The Losing of Gordon* for most of her life. As a child, she was a better than average student. She wrote dramatic poetry. Before college, she worked at a newspaper. In her professional career, she has worked in analysis, documentation, communications, and public speaking. She has also been able to incorporate her love of photography into the design of her books. She feels it is her destiny to relay this true story to readers in a way that will help them in their own difficult trials.

Joni is also the author of *The Cancer Patient W-I-N Book: Our Cancer Fight Journal*.

**For more information, please visit [thecancerlifeline.com](http://thecancerlifeline.com) or [griefbeacon.com](http://griefbeacon.com).**

**About the Books:**

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