

Coping with Anniversaries

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By: Stephanie

For people who have been a victim of rape or sexual abuse, the anniversary or anniversaries of what happened to you are far from easy to deal with. They are times when you may feel particularly triggered and depressed. You may know the exact date and time of your anniversary or you may only have a vague idea of when it might be. Some people also have no idea of the time or times of their assaults, but may find that a particular time of year is triggering to them. or they get down at a certain season or month each year. Of course you may not remember your anniversary at all and you may wish to choose a particular day which you can adopt as an anniversary day and use it to honour yourself and your recovery. Whenever or however you remember your anniversary it is important to be particularly gentle with yourself round these times.

Coping with an anniversary is a personal thing and whatever works for you is the best plan of action. Things you may wish to consider on this day are:

Taking the day off

If you have a difficult or demanding job you might want to plan to take this day off in advance if possible. Anniversaries are hard enough and you don't need any extra stress. This is not an indulgent thing to do, there is nothing wrong with taking a specified day to take care of yourself.

Keeping busy

Alternatively you may prefer to keep yourself busy. This could be with work or with more pleasurable activities such as meeting up with friends. Some people prefer to keep their brains busy on difficult days - if this is you then it is wise to make sure that you have plenty planned for this day.

Being nice to you!

However you want to spend the day make sure it is a day that is nice for you. Whether you want to spend the day in bed, in the bath, taking walks, shopping, on-line, eating ice cream or with friends is up to you, as long as you are doing something you enjoy!

Ritual

Some people find ritual useful. For example some survivors have found it helpful to turn their anniversaries into a celebration of survival like a birthday. There are many ways of doing this, some like to make or buy a cake, others to burn letters to their rapist or items of clothing they were wearing when they were attacked or pictures that they may have of them.

Spend time with friends & family

Draw strength and support from friends and family. Spend time with those who care for you. You deserve to be nurtured, loved and cared for - allow family and friends to be there for you.

Send a care package to a rape crisis or shelter

~ contributed by aardvarc~

As part of the celebration of your own healing, and in light of the hurdles you've crossed, why not help someone else (even someone you've never met) to get to where you are now? What difference in YOUR healing would some unconditional, and anonymous support have meant to you? How would knowing that a total stranger who has never seen your face or heard your voice or read your resume cares enough to put some heartfelt thought into making your day a little better JUST BECAUSE YOU ARE YOU? Well YOU have that power now. Make a care package for one or more soon-to-be survivors in local crisis shelters. Having worked in that environment, here's what my experience tells me would be most appreciated:

Small personal items are best - shelters get TONS of clothes, candy for the kids, and stuffed

animals (we used to dispose of them practically by the ton - we had 100+ stuffed animals PER CHILD (and quite frankly, they get really dirty and unsanitary), so how about: (remember that so many victims leave with just the clothes on their backs and VERY few personal items!)

- a body pillow - you know the really long ones that you can curl around
- some foundation and powder (you wouldn't BELIEVE how prized these are)
- some fun, colorful earrings
- a special non-refrigerated snack like a can of nuts, or hard candies
- super special personal treats like Twinkies, Pecan Rolls, etc. (comfort food)
- DEODORANT! (again, very highly prized because it's almost NEVER donated)
- a small, blank diary or journal or even just a little notepad with a cute pen
- a pair of soft white socks
- nail polish!!! funky, colorful, glittery - it's all good
- a variety of tea bags

Don't forget that it's ok to personalize your gift package with a little note of encouragement, if you wish. You could say something as simple as "I have been where you are, and the strength that it took shows that you have the strength you need." Your gift will mean SO much more, when it comes with words that bring hope for a better tomorrow.

They say that energy never dies, it only changes shape. YOUR energy, and hope, and care for a total stranger...it can only transform into something GOOD for someone else, and for all of us.

Remember that whatever works for you is the right thing to do - make the day about you, not the person who hurt you.

For more ideas you might want to check out the following thread in the wonderful threads forum:

[Coping with Anniversaries](#)

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