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"Next week is the 10th anniversary of 9/11," said Jean, whose brother perished on 9-11-2001, "and I am not sure what I want to do. Right now, going to New York seems like too much hoopla. But staying at home doesn't feel right either."

The "anniversaries" that come after the loss of someone we love, as well as birthday and holidays are invitations to despair, sweet remembrance and everything in between. Often we dread them; it's the day they died; it's the day they would have graduated; this was the holiday when the family came together each year; this would have been their 38th birthday; etc. To us, these dates are painful reminders that we will never see or speak with them again. Ever. Life is going to go on without them, whether or not we like it. A part of our future is lost. But they can also be opportunities for expressing our love and honoring them in special ways.

Either way, those of us who lost loved ones on 9-11 need to take especially good care of ourselves as the 10th anniversary approaches. What exactly does this mean? We need to sort out our options on how to spend the days and weeks ahead; we need support for what we decide to do; we need to be held in gentle arms. In short, we need clarity, patience, understanding and courage.

We can express our love for those we have lost and honor them, while also being kind to ourselves.

I recently asked members of our California "9-11 Support Group" what they wanted --and didn't want -- from the 10th anniversary date of the terrorist attacks. This is what they told me:

"I want to be with the other families."

"I want all of us to remember those who died."

"I just want to make it through the day. I want it to be over."

"I want to keep it very simple. And do only what I need to do."

"I want to avoid the hoopla."

"I only want to do what holds value for me."

"I don't know what I want. It changes."

"I don't want to be traumatized all over again"

These people have lived through 10 anniversaries. Some have been worse than others. They have learned a great deal about what to do, like keeping it simple, and what not to do, such as overdoing it. If you're experiencing anxiety or "anniversary dread," as September 11th approaches, below are some things that can help you through what may be a stressful time.

The first option should always be to keep it simple or "do nothing." We all want to remember and honor our loved ones, but for some of us, the pain is still unbearable -- the days are already too difficult. We just want to get through it. For others, the anniversary presents an opportunity to do something that expresses our love, sorrow, hope, grief, anger and regret. To heal. To sanctify. To say "Thank you." Each one of us grieves differently and has different needs. The following suggestions are designed to help you decide what to do before, during and after an anniversary.

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