

Coping with grief during the holidays

Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Christmas, Ramadan, Kwanza and New Year's may be special days in your life, and difficult to experience when someone you love is no longer with you.

The following suggestions are offered to help you manage the holidays and find healthy ways to grieve.

Maintaining traditions

- For some, relying on family traditions that have been practiced for years can be comforting. If you chose to continue with tradition, consider doing only a part of it. Choose which part you can do at a comfortable level.
- If you stay at home, plan your time with some activity or with others. You may desire to rent movies, write cards, plant a special flower, or take a walk.
- If you go to a social event, take your own car. You may suddenly feel overwhelmed and want to leave. If you go with someone, tell them you may want to leave early.
- If you attend a service, give yourself permission to cry during the ceremony. Sit in the back of the church or synagogue in case you want to leave early.

Deviating from the norm

- Traditions may be difficult to experience now that someone you love is no longer with you. Give yourself permission to deviate from the norm.
- If you chose to go on a trip or leave the area, remain as autonomous as you can so you have options to return if you want.
- Children are likely to understand changes in tradition if it is explained to them. Say: "We miss Grandpa so much that this year we want to do something different."
- Use this time to pamper yourself. Get a massage or drive to a beautiful place.

Honor your loved one

- Incorporate a way to honor your loved one into your holiday celebration.
- For some, dedicating a prayer or blessing to your loved one at your holiday celebration can be comforting.

Unique Ways to Honor your Loved One:

- Write a special card for your loved one and hold onto it. Keep the cards in a special box and look at them each year.
- Volunteer at a special place for the holidays if you have the energy.
- Send flowers in honor of your loved one to a charity or service group.
- Do something special for an acquaintance that may be in need of help, and provide the gesture as a gift from your loved one.
- If you have family for the holidays, plan a time when each person can share a favorite or funny story of your loved one. Remembering and laughing is very healing.
- Make a picture album of your loved one and share as gifts.
- Write a letter to your loved one and keep it in a special journal.
- Buy balloons and let each one be a special wish to your loved one as you release them.
- Make your loved one's favorite dish or desert.
- Have photographs of your loved one printed and/or enlarged for others.
- Light a candle for your loved one or plant a tree.

*Above all, be gentle with yourself at others around you.
Remember that grieving is a process, just as loving is a process.
The pain you feel today is not where you will stay forever.*