

## **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.*