

During the holiday season...

“Holidays are time spent with loved ones” was imprinted on our psyche from a young age. Holidays mark the passage of time in our lives. They are part of the milestones we share with each other and they generally represent time spent with family. They bring meaning to certain days and we bring much meaning back to them. But since holidays are for being with those we love the most, how on earth can anyone be expected to cope with them when a loved one has died? For many people, this is the hardest part of grieving, when we miss our loved ones even more than usual. How can you celebrate togetherness when there is none? When you have lost someone special, your world loses its celebratory qualities. Holidays only magnify the loss. The sadness feels sadder and the loneliness goes deeper. The need for support may be the greatest during the holidays. Pretending you don’t hurt and or it is not a harder time of the year is just not the truth for you. If it wasn’t harder you probably wouldn’t be here. You can and will get through the holidays. Rather than avoiding the feelings of grief, lean into them. It is not the grief you want to avoid, it is the pain. Grief is the way out of the pain. There are a number of ways to incorporate your loved one and your loss into the holidays. (whatsyourgrief.com)

Special ways to remember your loved one:

- Put out a “memory box” or a “memory stocking” where you and others can write down memories you treasure. Pick a time to read them together.
- Try journaling or keeping a gratitude list. This can be difficult but try to find one daily gratitude throughout the holiday season. Write it down, photograph it, share it on facebook. Whatever. Just look for the little things.
- Put out a photo table with photos of your loved one at holiday celebrations in the past.
- Create a new tradition in memory of your loved one. Light a candle in your home in memory of the person you’ve lost. Set a place setting, play their favorite music, or serve food they enjoyed or make an ornament in their honor. Have a moment of silence or toast in their honor.



HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS WE HOPE YOU'LL FIND HELPFUL:

- Acknowledge that the holidays will be different, while they may be tough for you, others may not find the holidays so difficult. Everyone's grief is different.
- Decide which traditions or rituals you want to keep such as decorating, parties, sending cards etc. For some, surrounding themselves with family and/or friends is comforting. For others, they are more comfortable spending time by themselves. Do what works for you during the holidays.
- Be honest. Tell people what you DO want to do for the holidays and what you DON'T want to do. Plan ahead, it can help reduce anxiety knowing you have a plan in place for the holidays. It's OK to make tentative plans. You can let others know that you will keep them updated on how you are feeling.
- Talk to kids about the holidays – it can be confusing for kids that the holidays can be both happy and sad after a death. Let them know it is okay to enjoy the holiday, and it is okay to be sad.
- Choose to be around people who are supportive and make you feel comfortable. Be around people who are ok with tears and talking about your loved one. It's ok to cry.
- If you are stressed about the crowds at the mall, cut back on gifts or do your shopping online, it may help if you are not ready to see all the holiday decorations.
- Say yes to help. There will be people who want to help and may offer their support. Take them up on their offers. If people aren't offering, ask. This can be super-hard if it isn't your style, but it is important. Asking others to help with cooking, shopping, or decorating can be a big relief.
- Practice self-care. Whatever it is that helps you recharge, do it. The holidays can be hectic, make some quiet time for yourself, to journal, meditate, listen to music, etc. Try to eat healthy, get enough rest, exercise and spend time outside.
- Remember, it is okay to be happy – this doesn't diminish how much you love and miss the person who isn't there this holiday. Don't feel guilty for the joy you do find this holiday season. Enjoy yourself! The holidays will be tough, but there will also be love and joy.

We wish you peace and comfort this holiday season.

IF YOU NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT, PLEASE CONTACT VICKI SHOEMAKE AT 601.622.6769.

