

Navigating Grief through the Holidays



CARE FOR YOURSELF

This holiday season may be a particularly difficult time for you and your family. Be gentle and kind to yourself. As you go through the holidays, remember that it is okay if you're feeling sad and need to shed some tears, take a moment to be by yourself, or cry openly and share your feelings and sadness about the loved one you're missing. But, also take moments to remember what it is about the holidays that brings happiness to your soul. Give yourself permission to enjoy the little (or big) things, share happy memories and even some laughter.

SET EXPECTATIONS

You have experienced a major loss that has inevitably changed your life. Anticipation of the holidays and special gatherings can often be more difficult than the actual holiday or event itself. Making plans ahead of time can help ease the stress and feelings of that particular day. Consider creating a plan for the holidays this year. If you have children in your life, allow them to be part of the planning. Be realistic with what you want and are able to emotionally and physically handle right now. Do not be afraid to say, "no." Communicate these expectations with those you will be spending time with over the holidays. Also know that it is okay if you are not clear on exactly what you are and are not able to do this year. Keep an open channel of communication with those closest to you so that they can provide support and help you through this time.

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

Grief can be sneaky and moments of mourning can happen even when we least expect them. You may walk into a situation feeling neutral or perhaps even joyful, but all the sudden you hear a song, see someone from across the room, or your loved one comes up in conversation, and this ignites sudden feelings and thoughts to bubble to the surface. Be gentle and kind to yourself. It is okay and normal to have these unexpected bursts of emotions. Do what you need to do to and do what makes you feel most comfortable...find someone you trust to share with or take a moment to be by yourself.

BE OPEN TO SUPPORT

Friends and family want to be there for you during this difficult time. Be open and allow them to support you this holiday season. Find someone you trust to share your thoughts and feelings with. Be willing to accept support that would be helpful when it is offered. When a friend asks how they can help you and your family, offer suggestions. How helpful would it be if your friend helps you clean your house, brought dinner over, dropped groceries off, or babysat your children so you could go shopping? Those closest to you want to help you...allow them.

A TIME FOR REFLECTION & REMEMBRANCE

Love does not end at death. The person you are missing this holiday season made a big impact on your life and will continue to be a large part of your life forever. Create a safe space for all types of reflection. Some of your family members may share openly about the person who died and find the comfort of others most helpful, while others may prefer to grieve privately. It is important to remember that no person grieves the same as another. You may consider incorporating special moments of remembrance for the person who died into the holidays. Involve the children in your family in the planning process. You could set a place at the table for your loved one, create a memory box, share photos, sing, hang a stocking, visit their grave, or participate in an activity that brought joy to you and person who died.



DON'T AVOID YOUR GRIEF

Be careful not to fall into society's misconceptions of grief – "be strong," "don't be sad during the holidays," "get over it and move on." Our modern culture wants us to jump on the grief and mourning highway, speed along as fast as possible, and move on...better yet, do not mourn at all. Unfortunately, this does not work. In order for us to live our lives to our fullest and find hope and healing, we need to embrace our grief and sadness. Allow yourself to mourn and grieve.

DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Often times the act of giving or doing something for others has a powerful affect on us as grievers. Consider making a donation in memory of your loved one to an organization that means something to you or the deceased. Volunteer somewhere meaningful to you or your family. You can do something for others by yourself, with your family, or group of close friends.

Tides
PROGRAMS
Support For Every Wave of Grief