

## Navigating Grief and the Holidays

### Companions on a Journey Grief Support

For many, the word “Christmas” signifies the holidays are arriving and there is much to be done. For those of us who grieve, the word “Christmas” stands out as the bold reminder of yet another hurdle we must endure in our journey of grief.

Holiday grief can be unpredictable and overwhelming. When you feel out of a control, **these are a few ideas that may give you some control of the challenges of the holidays...**

- Slow down, listen to your heart and honor your loved one by reflecting on the special memories and blessings of past Christmases together. Light a candle in their memory.
- Communicate. Take the time to talk openly with family and friends about each of your holiday expectations. Let them know your needs and listen to their needs as well. If you have children, talk with them and share your ideas with them, asking for their input on what they would like to do.
- Simplify; give yourself permission to do this.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help or accept help. Remember, it is in giving that we receive. The gift you may give someone is allowing them to help you.
- If you cannot decorate or send cards that's okay, but still find a way to share the light of your love with others.
- Set aside some “letting go” time for crying, journaling or talking with your loved one.
- Take the time to create a special ornament by placing a note to your loved one inside the ornament. You can ask others to do the same.
- If you used to buy a present for your loved one, you may think of a way in which you could buy something for someone else in memory of your loved one. Choose a gift for a child, for a family in need, or do a random act of kindness. Family and friends may also want to participate in this way.
- If you've lost a child and want them to be a part of the family's gift exchange, communicate with your family that you would like your child to be remembered by having them buy a gift for a child in need. You can even ask them to wrap a picture of what it is that they bought and open it up when gifts are being exchanged.

Remember Christmas, holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and everyday all have one thing in common in that they all last just 24 hours. So, break the day down; hour to hour, minute to minute, whatever you feel that you can handle.

Above all, bear in mind that there is no “right” way to handle holidays, anniversaries, or birthdays. You and your family may decide to try several different approaches before finding one that feels best for you.

This Christmas take the time to be present to the present moment. Allow yourself to honor your grief and give yourself permission to create new memories.