



## **GriefNet Library: Coping with Grief during Holidays**

### **Tips for Handling the Holidays**

1. **DECIDE WHAT YOU CAN HANDLE COMFORTABLY AND LET FAMILY AND FRIENDS KNOW.** Can I handle the responsibility of the family dinner, etc. or shall I ask someone else to do it? Do I want to talk about my loved one or not? Shall I stay here for the holidays or go to a completely different environment?
2. **MAKE SOME CHANGES IF THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** Open presents Christmas Eve instead of Christmas morning. Vary the timing of Channukah gift giving. Have dinner at a different time or place. Let the children take over decorating the house, the tree, baking and food preparation, etc.
3. **RE-EXAMINE YOUR PRIORITIES: GREETING CARDS, HOLIDAY BAKING, DECORATING, PUTTING UP A TREE, FAMILY DINNER, ETC.** Do I really enjoy doing this? Is this a task that can be shared?
4. **CONSIDER DOING SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR SOMEONE ELSE.** Donate a gift in the memory of your loved one. Donate money you would have spent on your loved one as a gift to charity. Adopt a needy family for the holidays. Invite a guest (foreign student, senior citizen) to share festivities.
5. **RECOGNIZE YOUR LOVED ONE'S PRESENCE IN THE FAMILY.** Burn a special candle to quietly include your loved one. Hang a stocking for your loved one in which people can put notes with their thoughts or feelings. Listen to music especially liked by the deceased. Look at photographs.
6. **IF YOU DECIDE TO DO HOLIDAY SHOPPING, MAKE A LIST AHEAD OF TIME AND KEEP IT HANDY FOR A GOOD DAY, OR SHOP THROUGH A CATALOGUE.**
7. **OBSERVE THE HOLIDAYS IN WAYS WHICH ARE COMFORTABLE FOR YOU.** There is no right or wrong way of handling holidays. Once you've decided how to observe the time, let others know.
8. **TRY TO GET ENOUGH REST -- HOLIDAYS CAN BE EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINING.**
9. **ALLOW YOURSELF TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.** Holidays often magnify feelings of loss. It is natural to feel sadness. Share concerns, apprehensions, feelings with a friend. The need for support is often greater during holidays.
10. **KEEP IN MIND THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF MANY BEREAVED PERSONS IS THAT THEY DO COME TO ENJOY HOLIDAYS AGAIN. THERE WILL BE OTHER HOLIDAY SEASONS TO CELEBRATE.**
11. **DON'T BE AFRAID TO HAVE FUN.** Laughter and joy are not disrespectful. Give yourself and your family members permission to celebrate and take pleasure in the holidays.

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