Unity | Strength at Your Side

Handling the Holidays



The holiday season is traditionally a time of gathering to celebrate with friends and family, yet for those who have experienced the death of a loved one, those feelings might be overshadowed by grief. We invite you to take a few moments to reflect on the following to find hope and comfort this holiday season.

CONSIDER WHAT MATTERS

After a loss, you may find comfort in some holiday traditions and not others. Take time to consider holiday activities that are meaningful to you. Is it important to decorate a tree, send holiday cards, make cookies, or attend each gathering? Consider if there are ways to do things on a smaller scale or who you may reach out to for help. Decide what you are saying "yes" to in this season and put it on your calendar. Remember what you do this year does not define what you do in the future.

BE AWARE OF LIMITATIONS

Grief can be exhausting, consuming your physical and emotional energy, no matter what the season. The holidays place additional demands on you and your time. Listen to what your mind, body, and spirit are telling you. Be realistic in the expectations you place on yourself, remembering that you are deserving of kindness and rest.

INFORM OTHERS OF YOUR NEEDS

Asking for what you need from others can be uncomfortable, yet allowing your needs to be known is a way to care for yourself. As you become aware of your needs, communicate those needs with friends and family. Be specific when sharing your preferences and let them know if those needs change.

ASK FOR AND ACCEPT HELP

While it can feel vulnerable to ask for help, people are often looking for ways to provide support. Ask those who care about you to assist with holiday shopping, decorating, cleaning, cooking, etc. This may lessen your feelings of loneliness and may make these activities more enjoyable.

TALK ABOUT YOUR GRIEF

Sharing memories of your loved one and your experiences of grief with others are a part of healing. Take time to identify those who encourage you to be yourself and accept you, without judgement. Be open to expressing your feelings to these people, and as you share you might find yourself feeling a little lighter.

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF

It is natural after a loss to look inward and reflect on where you have been and where you are today. Be gentle with yourself as you move through the ups and downs of this season. Allow yourself to name what brings you joy, peace, and rest. Perhaps it is your favorite warm beverage or beloved holiday movie. Embrace the small and simple.

HEALING RITUALS

Memories were made in love, and memories are what keep you connected to your loved one during the holiday season. Consider the following healing rituals as you remember your loved one:

- Decorate the tree with family or friends
- Place a wreath at your loved one's gravesite
- Choose a candle or flower to be placed at the dinner table
- Make a loved one's favorite recipe
- Place written memories in a box to be shared during a gathering