



Strength  
at Your Side

## Ways of Coping During the Holiday Season

Just as the holidays may have impacted the intensity of your grief, you may feel like your ability to cope has been impacted as well. Coping skills you have been using may feel less effective or you may be looking for some ideas specific to the holidays. Below are some suggestions for coping with grief during the holiday season.

- **Pace yourself:** You do not have to uphold all the obligations you did in the past. Allow yourself the luxury to slow down, release and let go of the old "should have" and "have to" concept.
- **To say "No" is okay:** It is okay to tell others NO. This means you can reject invitations or visitors if you don't feel up to it. People will understand if you are not able to attend every function or event.
- **Pamper yourself:** If you deplete your energy you will have less strength to care for yourself or others during any holiday celebration. Therefore, take extra time for you!
- **Tell people what you need:** Friends and family will not know how to help you or relate to you unless you are specific about your wants and needs. Tell others what you need. Ask for help. Then congratulate yourself when you do.
- **Make new rituals:** When you make a new tradition it signals to yourself and others that your life has changed. A new tradition does not mean that your old traditions are any less important.
- **Honor traditions:** Traditions hold many emotions for people. After a loss some traditions may become more or less important. Let people know what traditions are meaningful to you and that you want to keep. It is okay to let some traditions go or take a break from them this year.
- **Remember your physical needs:** Eat, sleep and drink plenty of liquids to maintain your physical strength.
- **Tell others exactly what holidays are important to you:** You may take it for granted that others know what holidays and religious observances are important to you, but they don't.
- **Crying is okay:** Let the tears flow. You need to feel comfortable expressing yourself wherever you are. Crying is a natural outlet of grief. There is no need to apologize.
- **Make action plans:** During the holidays life can be busy and stressful. Before that special holiday arrives make a plan regarding how you are going to cope with stress. Make a list of people you can call when you need support and places you can go for solace and healing.
- **Consult your family and friends:** Talk to your family and friends to see what they want to do during the upcoming holiday. Many people may be feeling the same things you are feeling but may not know how to discuss them with you.
- **Lean on your faith:** Remember to touch base with your source of spirituality. It can bring comfort, strength and internal wisdom.

*A feeling of pleasure or solace can be so hard to find when you are in the depths of your grief. Sometimes it's the little things that help get you through the day. You may think your comforts sound ridiculous to others, but there is nothing ridiculous about finding one little thing to help you feel good in the midst of pain and sorrow.*

— Elizabeth Berrien