



Coping with Grief During the Holidays

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The holiday season can be one of the most difficult times of the year if you have experienced the death of someone you love. The holidays – a time of family and togetherness, traditions, joy and thankfulness – can suddenly bring sadness, loss, and a feeling of emptiness. It's a time when our senses are confronted with the sights, sounds and smells that can trigger memories of the past, resulting in a renewed sense of personal grief.

After the death of your loved one you may have already felt that coping with one day at a time was difficult enough and that energy for simple tasks was diminished. As the season approaches, treasured traditions may seem like a burden and you may be inclined to think that life will be awful during the holidays. You can try to ignore all that is going on around you, but that takes a tremendous amount of energy.

The holiday season is a time that represents hope, peace and love. You don't have to deny the reality of your loss or cover up your true feelings. Acknowledging that there is not a right or wrong way "to be" may help you to connect with what is meaningful for you.

Grief is a natural response to loss and nature's way of allowing us to heal. While the holiday season can be an especially trying time, grief has no timetable. Bereavement services at Unity are available to anyone who has experienced the death of a loved one all year long. The bereavement team is available for individual contact, group support and special memorializing opportunities.

Tips for Coping with Grief

- Consider where the challenges may come so you can make a plan that is comfortable for you. Tell family members and friends of your needs ahead of time so they understand that things may be different this year.
- Give yourself permission to make changes. Don't overextend yourself. Limit activities to suit your energy level.
- Ask for help. Accept offers for assistance with shopping, decorating, cooking, etc.
- Allow for flexibility and change plans as needed.
- Spend some time reflecting on the meaning of the season and things that bring meaning and purpose to your life.
- Share memories with your family and friends. Your loved one is missed, but not forgotten. Others around you may wait for you to take the lead in talking about them. Memories can bring both laughter and tears – both are okay.
- Light a special holiday candle in honor of your loved one as a reminder to everyone of this special person.

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