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# Grief during the holidays

– A resource for those grieving –



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Holidays tend to be difficult whether it's the first or the 10th holiday without our loved one. The happy memories of the holidays are dulled by waves of grief that arise from experiencing the holiday season without a loved one. Whether we are trying to just survive the holiday, take on all the traditions or form new ones, you must remember to give yourself grace and be patient. You are grieving. Here are some ways to help you survive the holidays:

- **View the holidays in perspective.**

The season is filled with pictures of happy families on social media, movies and TV. Lift the pressure off of yourself and acknowledge that this holiday and future ones will be different.

- **Do not overwhelm yourself.**

Sometimes the anticipation of the holiday is worse than the day itself. Planning the day does not change your loss, however it does give you more control over the situation.

- **Do what feels right to you.**

Sometimes we want to be with our families. Other times we want to get away from familiar sights and sounds. There is no rule book. If you wish to continue traditions, please do. If you wish to do something completely different, that is okay.

- **Be aware of “shoulds”.**

Don't set expectations too high for yourself or others. You do what feels best and not what others think you should do. Give yourself permission to not do things. Keep traditions you enjoy and find alternatives for things you don't.

- **Don't give into holiday pressure.**

Don't feel like you have to host dinner, go shopping or do all the baking. If these activities energize you, then participate in them. However, if they cause more stress, then don't be afraid to set limits. You are allowed to only take on what helps you during this time.

- **Embrace memories and have comfort in them.**

There is often a large void left during the holiday season without your person. You may not be able to fill that void, but you can't escape it either. Memories may flood in from every direction. Hold tight to these memories. Some may make you laugh, cry or even make you angry. Allow yourself to pause and surround yourself with those memories and feelings.

- **Keep your holiday plans flexible.**

If certain things didn't feel right year, then change them. The holidays will never be the same without your loved one, but they can still be special. Make these days your own.

- **Grieve and still be present for the holidays.**

There is no magic solution that will take away your pain during this time. However, it does not have to be a choice between grieving and being present. You can grieve, yet still be a part of the day in your own way. If you are feeling sad, express it. If you are feeling joy, express that. You can have happy moments and still grieve your loved one.

- **Honor your loved one.**

The first holiday without your person may seem like you are just trying to survive and do the bare minimum or not celebrate at all. Other holidays, you may want to honor your loved one. Your person may not be physically present, but the relationship still exists. There are ways to help continue that bond. Below are some suggestions of how to honor them.

## SUGGESTIONS FROM OTHERS ON COMMEMORATING YOUR LOVED ONE:

From *Holiday Memories*  
by Rabbi Earl Grollman

“Grandma loved flowers so we place a single rose on the table in her memory.”

“We write special notes to my mother, put them in her Christmas stocking and then read them to one another during dinner.”

“In memory of our child, we dedicate the ‘shammes’, the ‘servant’ or ‘pilot light’ from whose flame the other Chanukah candles are lit.”

“We look through photo albums and

show home movies and recall those ‘good ole days.’”

“The chair where my grandfather always sat is given to the youngest grandchild to designate the continuity of generations.”

**We have a variety of grief services available during COVID-19 for anyone in the community.**

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