



# Children, Grief, You and the Holidays

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Following the death of a loved one, there are many firsts. One of the most difficult firsts can be the holidays. The following are some thoughts on how to help your family cope through the holiday season.

## Caring For Grieving Children

- Prepare children for changes in routine. It is perfectly acceptable to make changes in holiday routines, perhaps even preferable, but remember to prepare children well in advance for changes to holiday traditions.
- Include children and teens in planning. A family meeting to decide what changes will be appropriate for celebrating the holidays can alleviate a child's feeling of being left out.
- If a child appears to need extra reassurance during the holidays, remember they may have feelings of sadness, guilt, etc. that they are struggling with.
- Children may "regress" (find comfort in earlier behaviors) during the stress of the holidays.
- Children need opportunities to express their feelings and fears. Plan a ritual for remembering your loved one around the holiday season.
- Plan some extra time to spend one on one with your children during the holidays.
- Don't let the world dictate your schedule.

## Caring For Yourself

- You are the best one to know what you need for caring for yourself. Be kinder to yourself than you have ever been during the holiday season.
- There is no right or wrong way to grieve OR to spend the holidays. Choose activities or solitude based on your needs.
- Watch out for over commitment during the holidays. Say "no."
- Treat yourself.
- Give yourself credit for accomplishing the "firsts" as they come along.
- Be with people you want to spend time with. Say "no" to those you feel would need more energy than you have to give.
- Remember Your Loved One
- Buy a gift for your loved one, then give it to a stranger who needs it.
- Donate money to a special cause in your loved one's name or volunteer your time and/or talents.
- Talk about the deceased with those you are comfortable sharing.
- Plan a time for remembering. Set a place for them at the table, hang a stocking, retell stories of them.

## Anniversary Dates

- An anniversary of the death of a loved one can cause anxiety and stress, which are normal grief reactions.
- Give yourself permission to feel your own feelings about the day and plan how you want to spend your time.
- Remember that anticipation is sometimes worse than going through the actual day.
- Don't allow others to dictate the extent to which you observe the day.