

Handling Grief and Loss During the Holidays

Holiday festivities, especially at Christmas, present challenges as we grieve the passing of a loved one. Music, decorations and seasonal activities remind us of past celebrations, bringing back memories that can create strong feelings of sadness. Knowing that these feelings are normal and planning the activities in which you will participate provides you with the support to find comfort and balance during this difficult time. We offer some suggestions to assist you.

For Yourself

- a) Choose to participate in the activities which are meaningful and bring you comfort.
- b) Balance your days between active tasks and quiet times
- c) Allow yourself time to feel the sadness of missing your loved one
- d) Give yourself permission to limit the traditional activities this year
- e) Surround yourself with friends and family who give you support
- f) Find special ways to remember your loved one

With Your Family

- a) Talk about your loved one, sharing stories and memories
- b) Start a new tradition in memory of your loved one
- c) Choose, together, to help others in your loved one's memory
- d) Include activities, music, foods that your loved one enjoyed
- e) Visit the cemetery and decorate the grave site together
- f) Participate together in a meaningful religious or holiday ceremony
- g) Enjoy laughter and joyful activities/interactions

With Your Friends

- a) Be honest with your feelings and ability to participate in activities
- b) Choose those friends and activities that are supportive and comforting
- c) Offer to visit with friends in January, after the holidays have passed
- d) Reduce gift giving and other activities which are overwhelming
- e) Replace too many social interactions with different ways to communicate
(phone calls, e-mails, short personal notes)